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The lost jewel, by A.L.O.E.

Charlotte Maria Tucker



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THE LOST JEWEL:

A TALE.

BY

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THE LOST JEWEL.



CHAPTER I.

THE JEWEL AND ITS WEARER.

“WHAT if he should sleep till the morning?” Such was the mental reflection of Maurice Somers, as for the hundredth time the weary boy turned his drowsy eyes towards the spot where, seated in his red velvet easy-chair, Sir John was enjoying a comfortable slumber.

Maurice had arrived late in the evening at the house of his uncle in London; had been received with such condescending hospitality as a rich man, of kind heart, but not refined nature, shows to a needy relation; had answered shyly a few questions about his journey and his late home, put in a loud, patronizing tone, and had partaken of refreshment while his uncle stretched himself at ease on the velvet chair.

before mentioned. Ere the slices of cold ham and eggs had been discussed by the hungry boy, Sir John had lost in sleep all recollection of the presence of so insignificant an individual.

Maurice sat in profound silence at the table, afraid of disturbing by any movement the repose of his relative and host. The uncle and nephew formed a remarkable contrast. Sir John's features might still have been termed handsome ; but the rounded outlines, the purple-tinged cheek, the full lower lip slightly protruded, told of habitual self-indulgence. He was a man whom fortune had so loaded with her gifts, that natural intelligence of mind and energy of character had been cramped and stifled beneath them. He had lived but for enjoyment, and had found it, till enjoyment had sunk into satiety. The stimulus of necessity had never been felt ; Sir John knew not the spur of ambition ; the soft-cushioned arm-chair in which he now reclined was the emblem of what had been his position through life, from the hour when his father's tenants had first drunk the health of the baronet's heir in tankards of flowing ale.

Maurice Somers was an orphan, and a poor one. One might have guessed both facts from the black dress of homely material, which hung loosely on his slight, delicate frame; his pale cheek, his deep sunken eyes, already wearing the thoughtful, anxious expression, so painful to see in childhood. He had the shy, almost timid manner of one who has known little of the world, or has known it only by its frowns. Maurice was a retiring, meditative boy, whose intellectual powers had outstripped his physical, whose thoughts flowed more rapidly than his words, who felt keenly, but seldom expressed his feelings, save by the earnest glance of the eye, the sudden flush of the cheek.

Sir John slept long; his slumbers appeared interminable to his nephew. There was little in the apartment to attract the attention of the boy. Furniture solid and handsome; a side-board of carved oak, supporting a large silver salver, and two lamps surmounting columns of bronze; a few framed portraits on the wall, and a pedigree hung over the door at a height to defy inspection;—these, with a clock on the mantelpiece, constituted almost the only objects

within the view of Maurice Somers. On the clock the boy's eye most frequently rested; it was one of those skeleton time-pieces which expose all their works to sight, and the child surveyed curiously from his seat the mysterious wheel upon wheel, and chain upon chain, of the complicated machine. As he watched the restless pendulum swaying to and fro, like the beating pulse which sends life through a human frame, he strove vainly to connect cause with effect, and comprehend how the motion of that pendulum could draw round the slowly revolving wheels. Time after time Maurice listened,—as, when the gilt hand touched the quarters, a silvery chime rang out, and broke the oppressive stillness within the room, which was rendered only more oppressive to the boy's unaccustomed ear, by the almost ceaseless roll of carriages without. There was something in the soft music of those chimes which called into the orphan's mind a flood of tender recollections. He thought of his own village church in far Devon, and the sweet bells from its "ivy-mantled tower," which so oft had called him to the house of prayer. He seemed to feel again

the touch of his mother's hand as they walked together across that verdant meadow, where they used to seek for their favourite wild-flowers. The broken stile rose before the eye of memory, on the top round of which Maurice had stood so proudly the first time that he had succeeded in climbing it without the aid of a friendly hand. And Maurice's thoughts wandered on to the village churchyard, and its mounds of verdant green; above all, to that quiet corner where, almost hidden by the large old yew tree, a simple gravestone bore the names of a pastor and his wife, lovely in their lives, and in their deaths not divided. As the orphan boy had stretched himself beside that stone, he had felt as if all his world of happiness were buried for ever in that grave. The wide world held not, and never would hold, a spot more sacred to the heart of Maurice.

Then the stream of thought flowed on from the sad but beautiful Past, to the misty, untried Future. Maurice had come to the home of one who, though nearly related to the boy, was yet to him a perfect stranger. He had come as a helpless dependent; his earthly fate

lay in the hands of that man, whose countenance, as he slumbered in his chair, Maurice studied with anxious attention. He had never seen his uncle before that evening, but Sir John had been the hero of many a tale which his mother had left him of her childhood; and Maurice's fancy had formed an image, strangely differing from the original now before him. Could that heavy, indolent-looking form, those inanimate features, really belong to the once curly-headed boy, who had climbed the high tree for the magpie's nest, who had plunged into the mill-pond to save his drowning puppy, and whose merry voice used to ring through the halls of Grandmont, as he raced through them with his younger brother! What a change must time have wrought! Maurice was vainly endeavouring to reconcile his own fancies with the reality which he saw—as unlike each other as the gray towers of the baronet's birthplace from his brick-built, luxurious London mansion—when the object of his reflections suddenly awoke, stretched himself, and looked at the clock.

“Almost eleven! Well, it is time, I should say, for Albina to make her appearance, or she

will not be ready when Lady Fawcett calls for her. These girls take as long in dressing themselves out for a ball, as a man-of-war in rigging out for a voyage. You here yet, Maurice, my man? why, you should have been in bed an hour ago. Staying up to see your cousin in her finery, eh?"

Maurice had not time to reply, for a light rustling was heard on the stairs, and the next minute the door unclosed, and a young lady attired in the height of fashion, fluttered into the apartment. Maurice, fresh from his rural retirement, and knowing nothing of fine ladies but from books, was almost dazzled by the fair apparition suddenly presented to his view. Albina was a beautiful girl, and her dress set off to advantage the natural advantages which she possessed. Exquisite flowers drooped from her glossy brown hair, arranged with artistic skill, corresponding with the rose-buds which looped up the robe of pink tulle, floating like gossamer over the rich satin beneath. Arm and neck sparkled with brilliants, which

"O'er their dazzling whiteness shone,
Like dew on lilies of the spring;"

and nothing was omitted which could add an additional attraction to that of youth and beauty.

"What a lovely soul," thought Maurice, "must dwell in so charming a form!" How prone are we to judge of the jewel by the casket, of the pearl by the outer shell.

"Albina, my dear, here's your cousin Maurice," was the introduction given by Sir John, and the tips of a delicate white glove were graciously extended to the boy.

"I'm glad you are for once down in time," pursued the baronet, "Lady Fawcett is not of a temper to stand waiting."

"Oh, she's an old virago!" exclaimed Albina; "but she deserved to have had her patience tried for appointing so ridiculously early an hour." Here the sleepy Maurice opened his eyes wide with surprise. "We shall hardly find the candles lighted, and I hate to be the first in the room. But," added the young lady with nonchalance, playing with her feather-tipped fan, "I shall have my own way about coming home, and shall keep up the selfish old creature till four o'clock in the morning. I always like to return by

daylight. Don't you wish you were coming with me?" she added, turning to Maurice with a smile.

"I would rather go to bed," said the boy, who had for half the day been rattling along in a railway train. The baronet and his daughter laughed.

"You're a rustic indeed," said the latter. "I daresay that you are accustomed, like the birds, to be up with the sun, and to go to roost when he sets. Well, I was out last night, and the night before, to say nothing of a botanical fête; and to-morrow I have two parties, and on Saturday a morning concert, and the opera in the evening."

"How dreadfully tired you will be on Sunday," exclaimed the unsophisticated Maurice.

"Oh, this is what I call *life*!" said Albina. "Yours has been mere vegetation, mere stagnation; I could not exist without excitement and amusement! Papa's great grievance is that Grandmont is only ten miles from town, scarcely out of reach of the grinding organs; but I am sure that if I had been planted for six months in the year on a dreary Welsh

mountain or a wild Scottish moor, I should have died long ago from sheer ennui."

The baronet had risen from his chair, and standing with his hands behind him and his back to the mantelpiece, was surveying, with a parent's partial eye, his fair daughter in her splendid attire. A look of displeasure, however, now crossed his face, as he said, "How is this, Albina? I thought that I had desired you never to wear the Atma when you are going out at night; it is far too valuable to be risked."

"I suppose that is your spoilt child's perverseness, papa," replied Albina; "but there is nothing that I like wearing so well. Is it not beautiful?" she inquired of Maurice, indicating a diamond of extraordinary size which she wore in the place of a brooch.

"Yes," replied Maurice; "but not at all more beautiful than the jewels round your neck and your lovely bracelets."

"Oh, my dear child, that remark shows your utter ignorance upon the subject; this one diamond is worth fifty times more than all the rest put together."

"Grandmont Hall, and all its broad acres to boot," added Sir John.

Maurice looked at the jewel with astonishment. "It does not sparkle so much as the others," he observed.

"No, you are right there," said Albina. "Like other gems from the East, it is clumsily set, and badly cut. I am always teasing papa to send it to the jeweller; but he says that it would lose so many carats' weight in the cutting, that it would be worth I don't know how many thousand of pounds less in a civilized shape, than it is now in its barbaric grandeur."

"Besides," interrupted Sir John, "I would not trust it into any jeweller's hands."

"Such a little thing, and yet so precious!" said the wondering Maurice.

"Have you not heard of the Koh-i-noor?" asked Albina; "you will see it in the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park. That jewel, which a baby could hide in its fist, would be in itself a dowry for a princess. It is certainly very splendid, but we would not change the Atma for the Koh-i-noor."

"The jewels have strange names," observed Maurice.

"Koh-i-noor," said Sir John, "signifies *mountain of light*; and Atma is the term for *the soul*, both words being of Eastern"—

He was interrupted by a loud knock at the door. Albina languidly rose from her seat, and motioned to Maurice to place her pink opera-cloak on her shoulders.

"Give me the Atma, my love," said the baronet, "I will lock it up in my secretary till to-morrow."

"Oh! really you must excuse me," exclaimed the young lady; I have set my heart on wearing it to-night—just to-night! I am so anxious that Lady Mary should see it; she always wears her diamond tiara, as though she thought that no one had a jewel but herself! Miss Grant says that she could swear that the tiara is nothing but paste, and I do believe that she is right."

"Lady Mary may wear what she pleases," said Sir John, "but really I cannot allow"—

The servant entered, and announced that her ladyship was waiting.

“I will be so careful, I promise you I will; you must not say anything this time, like a dear good papa!” exclaimed Albina; and, without waiting for further expostulation, the young beauty hurried out of the apartment.

“Wayward girl,—just like her!” said the baronet, good-humouredly: “see what comes of spoiling an only child! I hope that she will be careful,” he added, more gravely, resuming his seat on the red velvet chair; “an accident might occur, and I’d as soon lose my right hand as the Atma. Thomas,” he called out to the servant, “bring me my brandy and water!”

CHAPTER II.

THE SHIP ON FIRE.

"IT is not merely the rare size and value of the Atma," said the baronet, as he slowly sipped from his steaming tumbler the warm beverage of which Maurice had declined to partake, "I have other reasons for prizing the jewel. It is all that is left to me of an only brother."

Maurice glanced at the speaker's face, perhaps to see if it showed any sign of emotion at the recollections called up by his words; but if a fount of feeling lay beneath, it appeared as little visible in its effects as when the baronet had welcomed for the first time the orphan of a sister recently lost.

"You have heard of your uncle Gilbert?" said Sir John.

"Oh yes, often," replied Maurice, sadly, for the question recalled to his mind the rectory fire-side, where, seated at his mother's feet, he had listened to the dear voice which he was to

hear upon earth no more. "My uncle died a few years ago at sea."

"Did you ever hear the particulars of his death?"

"Something about the ship being on fire; but to talk about *that* always pained"—Maurice paused, and looked down; Sir John was not one in whose presence he could have pronounced the name of his mother.

"Well," said the baronet, whom his sleep or his warm beverage had rendered more loquacious than before, "I will tell you everything that happened. Your uncle was an officer in India—a very distinguished officer; led two forlorn hopes, was at the taking of a great city, and when prize-money and prize-jewels were divided, he was the envy of the army, for there fell to his share a diamond—one of the finest that had ever been dug out of the earth; that diamond you have seen this evening. He used to carry it about in his purse by day, and put it beneath his pillow by night, and it was a common saying, that Gilbert Alison slept with a rajah's ransom under his head.

"After a long residence in India, Gilbert

decided upon returning home to recruit his health, and see your mother and me once more. He took his passage in a large vessel bound for England, embarked, and for some time pursued his voyage quite prosperously. One night—I have the account from my friend Martin, an officer in the —, who was fellow-passenger with my poor brother—one night the ship's company were startled from their sleep by the loud cry of 'Fire!' and in a few minutes from the time when the first alarm was given, the deck presented such a scene as those who witnessed it were never likely to forget! Sailors rushing here and there; some labouring to keep down the fire, others straining every nerve to launch the boats without delay—ladies struggling up the hatchway, looking like frightened ghosts in the dim light, clasping their crying children, and wildly seeking their husbands in the crowd; volumes of smoke, getting thicker and more suffocating every moment, rolling up from the hold; all this, mingled with a confusion of sounds, officers' commands, cries of the seamen, trampling of feet, hysteric shrieks, and at last the crackling noise of the flames, was

enough to make the boldest spirit quail! Martin saw my brother in the thick of it all, calm and collected as if on parade. There were a few invalid soldiers on board, and these obeyed his commands readily, unflinchingly, as they had done a hundred times in the field. The boats were lowered into the waves, the flames were spreading fast; there was not a moment to be lost! The women and children were cared for first, the poor trembling creatures were lowered over the side—no crushing, no crowding. Gilbert was the presiding spirit, for the captain of the vessel's chief efforts were directed to keeping down the fire. Those efforts were utterly vain; the flames caught the rigging, and the darkness of night was fearfully illuminated by the devouring element. One crowded boat pushed off, another followed—Martin was in the third; by good fortune there was room for all. The captain, Gilbert, and two or three more, were all who now remained upon deck.

“‘Come down!’ shouted Martin to my brother. Gilbert grasped the rope in order to follow his companions, when suddenly a thought

appeared to strike him; exclaiming, 'the Atma!' (it was the last word that Martin ever heard him utter), he disappeared from the vessel's side, evidently rushing back into the furnace to recover the jewel that he had forgotten till then.

"The sailors swung themselves down into the boat, the captain descending the last, but where—where was Gilbert Alison? The heat was growing awful, the red flames now made everything bright as day, the waves reflecting the lurid glare, till the boat seemed rocking on a sea of fire.

"'Push off, push off!' cried a dozen voices; the oars were lifted, but Martin, with loud entreaties, urged the men to wait a few seconds longer for his gallant friend in the blazing vessel. Tongues of fire, volumes of smoke, burst from the port-holes both fore and aft, impatient faces were raised towards the bulwarks, impatient voices called out that further delay would be death. Martin has told me that every moment then seemed an age in its agony of suspense! At length, as the sailors were on the point of sheering off, a form rushed to the side of the

deck, and Martin caught a glimpse, it was but a glimpse, of a countenance above—every feature distinct in the fierce red light—they will be branded on his memory till his dying day! Then something was flung into the boat, and then—with a fearful crash down came a flaming spar, striking my poor brother over the side, and falling into the waves so close to the boat, that it was a marvel that the little craft, heavily laden as she was, was not swamped by the water which splashed into it from the concussion.

“My uncle, my poor uncle!” exclaimed Maurice.

“He, alas! was never seen more. The jewel which had cost him his life lay at the bottom of the boat; Martin took charge of it and brought it home to me. When he told me the story of the fire, the brave old soldier who had been in a dozen fights, and who would have charged boldly up to the mouth of a cannon, cried like a very child—looked as you do now, Maurice, my boy. Well, I was a fool to talk of such things to you, and at such an hour of the night,” said the baronet, wiping his own heated forehead, and breathing what was some-

thing like a sigh; "I don't often come upon the subject, but the sight of the Atma brought it back to my mind. Take your candle, and go to bed, Maurice; and don't be dreaming of flames and shipwrecks."

Advice more easily given than followed. Excited with the events of the day, the new page of life now opened before him on his arrival at the place which he must henceforth regard as a home, and yet where he felt utterly a stranger—all this, conjoined with the thrilling tale he had heard from the lips of his uncle, for a long space drove away sleep from the eyes of the weary boy. At length slumber stole over him; but even in slumber his mind was wandering amongst the broken images of what had engaged his waking thoughts.

Maurice dreamed that he was himself possessed of a jewel—one as far more precious than the Atma, as that rare gem exceeded in value any mere dewdrop of the morn: for in his dream Maurice deemed that his jewel was in reality what the Atma was only in name—a precious immortal soul; and that on the safe-keeping of this jewel depended not only

his welfare and happiness here, but through the endless ages of eternity. The boy experienced a weight of responsibility and anxiety such as, when awake, he had never known; for it seemed in his dream as though all the world conspired to rob him of his priceless treasure.

A light fairy form was beside him, in which fancy traced a resemblance to Albina, but the figure was more ethereal, more gaily and gorgeously attired, and a wing of the shape of the butterfly's, glittering with many tints, fluttered from either shoulder. In winning phrase, with flattering word and witching smile, the fair creature besought Maurice for his jewel; and scarcely could he resist the fascination of that pleading voice and glance.

On the other hand appeared a being of coarser feature, and larger form, who filled high and higher a cup chased with gold, till the contents overflowed the brim, and who, in a loud tone of command, bade him fling his jewel into the wine, and, like the Eastern queen of old, drink his treasure dissolved in the draught!

As Maurice pressed his gem tighter in his grasp, a thin hand was laid heavily on his arm,

and starting, he beheld a shrunken, withered, old man, with grizzled beard and keen but furtive glance, who held out before him a bag of gold, and whispering close in his ear, bade him name his price for the jewel. Maurice shrank back from the old man's touch, with a feeling of instinctive horror ; but the grasp grew only tighter and heavier, and the voice which sounded like wind in a vault, continued naming successively larger and larger sums, as the purchase-money of the coveted soul !

Cold drops rose to the brow of the sleeper, as he restlessly moved upon his pillow. The shadow of temptation lay dark on his spirit—what if he should have no power to retain that which was so far more precious than life ?

“ Let it be mine ! ” cried the soft enchantress.

“ It must be mine ! ” shouted her bolder companion.

“ It shall be mine ! ” hissed the hateful old man. Maurice, with a sudden effort, wrenched himself from the tempter's grasp, burst away from the syren, and from him who poured the red wine, and rushed forward in desperate flight, with the sounds of pursuit behind him.

By one of the strange transitions so common in dreams, suddenly the ground on which Maurice was rocked and heaved beneath his feet ; there was a noise of dashing waves, and he knew that he trod the deck of a vessel, and that the vessel itself was in flames ! Red and glowing like a canopy of fire, the fierce element spread above, around, before him. Maurice still held his jewel, but it was with the grasp of despair. Then, with the instinct of a soul that seeks help from above when it finds that in itself it is helpless, the dreamer cried in agony to Heaven. At once the flames seemed to divide, an opening appeared in front, and through this opening Maurice rushed to the vessel's side. He looked over the bulwarks, and behold, close beneath, a life-boat floated on the billows, with One at the helm whose face he could not see, but whose form was robed in glory. With another instinctive cry to his God, Maurice, in his dream, threw himself over the side, and found himself safe in the boat, with the jewel, the rescued jewel, close pressed to his palpitating heart. "Saved ! saved !" he exclaimed, and with that exulting cry he awoke !

CHAPTER III.

NIGHT-THOUGHTS.

It was some moments before Maurice realized where he was, his little room being in perfect darkness. The distant rumble of wheels, however, instead of the soft murmur of the cascade which had so often lulled him to sleep in his childhood, soon restored him to full recollection. The heat felt stifling and oppressive; Maurice rose, groped his way to the window, flung back the shutters, and threw up the sash. He gazed forth into the night. Maurice looked no longer as he had looked two evenings before, on the velvet lawn dotted with flower-beds, which his mother had loved to tend; the little cascade dancing over the rocks beyond, and the wooded hill which rose behind, where the nightingale was pouring forth her exquisite song. The full moon was shining over a range of mews, lighting up slate roofs, and brick chimneys, where not a single leaf of green refreshed the weary

gaze. Maurice unconsciously sighed, and looked upward to the sky. Never had the heavenly orb there appeared more lovely to his eye than it did now, when it and the light clouds which it silvered, were the only objects on which that eye could admiringly rest. That moon was now shining on his old home, it was the only thing to remind him of that home ; scenes change, circumstances alter, but the sky and the lights which God placed there, are above us wherever we go.

“ And I am indeed in London, in that great wonderful city which I have so often longed to visit, and in which I now feel so desolate and lonely !” Such were the reflections of the orphan, and he stood leaning his arm on the sill of his attic window. “ What a strange dream I have had ! It seems so real ; and all that has passed during the last month so much like a dream. Oh, that I could only wake and find that I have been sleeping all this while !” Maurice sighed heavily, and perhaps to divert his thoughts from their painful channel, turned them again upon his dream.

“ To have a soul, and a soul in danger, that

is not fancy but reality ; that is, I suppose, the case of every human being upon earth. And what enemies are they who seek to get from us our priceless jewel, who would win it only to destroy it?" Words came into the mind of the boy, familiar to his ear as often pronounced by his father's voice, though perhaps their full meaning was scarcely understood by Maurice, *The world, the flesh, and the devil.* "These are the enemies of the soul, it is against these that the treasure must be guarded."

Maurice's fancy flowed on, forming an allegory from his dream, as a reflection in clear water answers the object which it mirrors. "Yes, poor as I am, and so little cared for by the world, that were I to die to-night no one would weep for me here, no one would even miss me, I am the possessor of a jewel much more precious than that which my cousin wears. Does my uncle prize the Atma because his brother lost his life in saving it?" Maurice clasped his hands, and looked fixedly into the sky, as he thought what a price had been given for his own immortal soul! "But who will care for it here?" The boy instinctively felt

that his position in the house of his uncle would be one of temptation and trial. Even one evening had shown Maurice that Sir John was very different in many ways from what the orphan's parents had been ; that his ideas, his language, his habits, were altogether unlike those of the Devonshire pastor and his wife.

The moon, which had for some seconds been hidden by passing clouds, now shone out again in calm, pure lustre. Her gentle beams seemed to speak a message of peace to the orphan's heart. Could not the same hand that guided that radiant orb, guide the course of the fatherless boy—guard his soul from the perils that might beset it, keep it safe in the hour of temptation? Without closing the window, Maurice with noiseless step returned to his pillow, but before closing his eyes, commended himself to the care of his God.

“ Keep me, oh, keep me, King of kings,
Under Thine own Almighty wings,”

was his last thought ere he sank to that calm dreamless rest which exhausted nature required.

A more experienced mind than that of

Maurice might have traced farther the allegory of his dream; might have more clearly recognized, in its visionary forms, corrupting pleasure, sensual indulgence, and the love of gold, which is the root of all evil. Then in the fierce fire which enveloped the ship might have been seen the wrath of an offended God, the fearful flame of His justice, from which there is only *one* way of escape, but a way which is open to all. It might be that the whole life of Maurice was to prove a commentary upon his dream; that it shadowed forth all the great realities which concern the undying soul, not of the orphan alone, but of every reader who glances at these pages. A slight fiction may convey a deep truth; as the air, unable in its weakness to support the most fragile feather, yet bears in its trembling vibrations to the ear, the peal from the thunder-cloud above!

CHAPTER IV.

THE BARONET'S DAUGHTER.

MEANTIME Albina was fluttering in "the gay and festive scene," the "observed of all observers," the admired of all admirers, not only for her own beauty and grace, but also for the attractions of another kind possessed by the rich baronet's only child. Her every movement was watched, whether she whirled round and round in the dance, till excitement and exercise brought back to her cheek the colour which dissipation had banished, or with light affected laugh maintained playful badinage with one of the numerous partners who eagerly sought her hand.

"How singularly well Miss Alison looks to-night," observed a gentleman to the lady beside him.

"Well, yes," replied his partner, coldly, "she is pretty enough, but looks so dreadfully

conscious of the fact, that really I cannot admire her."

"Did you ever see such a display of magnificent jewels? She is wearing her Atma to-night."

"Absurd ostentation!" replied Lady Mary, who for once had this evening appeared without her own diamond tiara.

Albina enjoyed the ball extremely; the pleasure might be empty, might be fleeting, might be vain, but it was pleasure still; and like a butterfly amongst summer flowers, pleasure was all that she sought. She was noticed, she was admired, she was flattered, and nothing more was required for the time to put her frivolous soul into a flutter of delight. And could there be peril in this?

The poor shivering wretch who snatches another's purse is in peril, both from the laws of God and of man. The bold blasphemer is in peril, the sceptic who denies his Maker, or the murderer whose hand is red with blood, we know that their souls are in peril indeed. But a fair, young, thoughtless being like this, living in the world, and for the world, making amuse-

ment her first object, the gratification of vanity, the exaltation of self, her delight—can a snare be spread for her soul? can there be aught of peril for her?

We look with compassion, sometimes not unmingled with disgust, on the poor leper dying of a loathsome disease, or on the sufferer stricken with raging fever. But is the stamp of mortality less apparent in the bright bloom on the cheek of consumption? Spiritual death, like the death of the body, is not always repulsive in its form. Yet in how many a warning in the inspired pages of Scripture is that awful declaration echoed and enforced, *She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth!* Albina's peril was not that she liked amusement, but that she made it the end of her existence; not that her foot entered a ball-room, but that her hopes, her thoughts, her desires, found their centre within it.

Albina returned home in high spirits, in the gray light of an April morning. There were few to be found in the streets at that early hour, save the policeman on his solitary beat, or some harmless outcast whose pillow had been the

doorstep of some luxurious mansion. Here and there a laden cart moved slowly along the quiet road, or a carriage more rapidly whirled past, bearing home the votaries of pleasure. The soft morning air breathed refreshingly on the flushed cheek of Albina, who scarcely felt conscious of weariness till she entered the door of her home. Slowly she mounted the broad staircase. The house was closely shut up; scarcely a beam of the morn could struggle in through the shutters closed and barred. The sun was rising in his glory, streaking the east with crimson and gold; but this was the hour for sleep, and his shining radiance would have been intrusive within that dwelling.

Albina's mind was full of all that had passed at the ball. She smiled to herself as the sleepy-eyed maid removed the wreath from her hair, recalling the occurrences of the night. How Lady Mary had looked the mortification which she vainly tried to conceal; how Sir Philip had been more attentive than ever, and he really was a charming man, and how Henry Madden, poor youth, had stood silent and sullen all

through the latter half of the ball, because a certain fair lady had been pleased to forget her engagement to him for a dance.

“If I had lived in the good old times,” thought the young beauty, as she unclasped the rich bracelet on her arm, “what breaking of lances there would have been for my sake. What pleasure to have been the object of knights’ devotion, and the theme of minstrels’ song, to have sat Queen of Beauty at the gorgeous tourney, distinguished above all the ladies, even as the Atma”——

Albina raised her hand to the place where she had fixed her jewel, and sprang up with a sudden exclamation, which startled and frightened her drowsy attendant.

“Gone, gone, my precious jewel! nothing left but the empty setting! What shall I do? oh! what shall I do? How shall I meet my father?”

The Atma had, indeed, disappeared. Great was the hunting and searching for it, from the hall-door to the toilette-table. Vehement was the shaking of dress and cloak—anything that might possibly conceal it. Albina paced her room, looking in every likely and unlikely place

for the treasure which she had lost, blaming her own carelessness, wringing her hands, uttering passionate laments, as though overtaken by a heavy misfortune. The shutters were flung wide open, that the bright daylight might render the search more effectual. Its radiance overpowered that of the candles which gleamed in Albina's apartment; it was like truth's unwelcome beams dimming the world's artificial lights. The beauty caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror, her hair dishevelled, her cheek haggard, her eyes heavy and swollen; she found no flattery there. Weary, mortified, grieved at a loss which she feared could never be repaired, the child of fortune flung herself down on a sofa, and gave way to a violent burst of tears.

Was she the first—will she be the last—to lose the Atma, the jewel, in the pursuit of frivolous delights?

CHAPTER V.

AN EXCHANGE.

“ You’ve not paid your score for the last, and not another drop shall you have from me. Get you gone, for a drunken rogue as you are.”

The scene was the bar of a low public-house on the Surrey side of the Thames. The speaker was a stout, coarse-featured woman, attired in a brown silk gown a good deal the worse for wear, a black lace cap, trimmed with red ribbon, and large ear-rings which, if not made of gold, were intended to pass for that metal.

“ Och ! it’s not you as would be hard on a poor sowl as has been up all this blessed night, without a drop of the cratur to warm him, bawling his throat dry arter the carriages. ’cause the gintry, bad luck to ’em, wouldn’t fling him a copper for his throuble.”

Weary and haggard, indeed, looked Dermot, such was the name of the man who now stood at the door of the “ Green Lion.” He was a

picture of sordid misery. An old hat, guiltless of brim, and battered in at the crown, surmounted a tangled mass of hair. The bare elbows appeared through the sleeves, the feet through the worn-out shoes. The rags on the back of the wretched man would hardly hold together. But it was not only want and misery that might be traced on the unwashed, unshaven face. Dermot's bleared eyes, and reddened nose gave signs of habitual intoxication, while his unsteady gait and thick utterance contradicted his assertion, that the night had been spent "without a drop of the cratur."

"Off with ye," cried the landlady, sharply, "you've had too much already. D'ye think I give away my liquor for nothing?"

"Fair exchange is no robbery," said the Irishman, "there's what'll pay for a glass o' gin."

"What is it?" inquired the stout landlady.

"A rale di'mond it is," replied the linkman, carefully rubbing the object which he produced on that sleeve of his velveteen jacket.

"A diamond, stuff and nonsense! It's no more a diamond than I am a duchess. D'ye

think I don't know a jewel when I see one? We don't have diamonds as big as a pigeon's egg."

"It's a rale Irish di'mond," said Dermot, stoutly.

"A piece of cut glass, I take it," observed the woman, examining the Atma with the air of a connoisseur, and turning it round and round in her short, thick fingers. "'Taint a bad imitation neither; it wouldn't look ill as a shawl-pin."

"Jist the thing for a rale lady like you, Missus Brown; I've kept it for ye, I have, this fortnight; says I,"—

"Take your gin, then, and away with you," cried the landlady, pushing a glass of the liquid poison towards the already half-intoxicated man. Then, sweeping the Atma into her capacious pocket, Mrs. Brown resolved that she would "step over the way," where, next to a rag and bottle warehouse, stood a small shop, its window gay with all sorts of tinsel ornaments, glass set in copper, old bead head-dresses, faded feathers, gaudy crowns worn by play-queens in low theatres, and a quantity of second-hand finery, as dirty as it was showy.

"Timmins will set this strongly for two-

pence," thought Mrs. Brown; "I lost my big blue shawl-pin on Thursday and this will make a better show for the money."

Dermot reeled out from the public-house, one step lower in the scale of degradation—one step farther on in the path of ruin. Who that looked at him now could have thought of him as he once was, an innocent, golden-haired child, the delight of his mother, who, as she bent over her first-born, formed such bright hopes for his future! Who could have thought of him as the neat, active boy, the favourite in the village, ready to do any one a service, and treading earth as lightly and joyously as if care and sorrow were nothing but names! Who could have thought of him as the respectable, industrious young man who wooed and won the black-eyed Norah, and who felt such pride and joy as he brought his "darlin' wifie" to their small, but comfortable home! Alas! what hath one sin wrought, what misery has followed one fatal habit! There are children wailing for bread in the damp, cellar-like room, which will only be exchanged for the workhouse. There is a haggard, hollow-cheeked wife, bent and

aged, not by time, but by care, and misery, and want, who dreads to hear that step, for which she once listened with delight, who bears on her face marks of a brutal blow from the hand which placed on hers the wedding-ring which she has been forced to pawn for food !

And yet, but that morning, Dermot had picked up from the dust of the street a jewel, for which placards, could he have read them, were even now being posted in a hundred windows—for which advertisements had been sent to every leading paper in the town. A reward had been offered for that jewel, the possession of which would at once have raised him from poverty to comfort—would have clothed his ragged children, and saved his wife from the lingering death to which hardship and misery had doomed her. That jewel Dermot had thrown away for—a *glass of gin*. . Yes, even as he was daily throwing away things far more precious, health, character, peace of mind, present blessings, future hopes, the gift of reason, and the glorious privileges of a soul redeemed.

Was he the first—will he be the last—to lose the Atma, the jewel, for the brief enjoyment of a maddening draught ?

CHAPTER VI.

SUNDAY MORNING.

It is a bright, glorious morning in May. The large white clouds with their pearly edges scarce move in the soft blue ether. Nature wears her holiday garb; every fruit-tree is bursting into blossom, and the hedges are gay with flowers. Even in crowded London the influence of the sweet season is felt. It is the Sabbath, and a Sabbath brightness seems to be shed around. The streets are filled with streams of people, moving in various directions where the sound of the church-bells summons them to their respective places of worship. Families that can meet but little during the week have met together now. The worn artisan has donned his Sunday coat, and is enjoying, as the weary only can enjoy, the calm of the day of rest. The man of business has gladly thrown aside his six days' burden of care, and surveys with pride the little group of his children, to

whom, but for the Sunday's holiday, he must have been almost a stranger. The aged mother, in her decent weeds, can go to the house of prayer, leaning on the arm of her apprentice-son; and united families together blend their thanksgivings and songs of praise.

Sir John's pew is not empty—nor full, for it is a rule, which he never breaks, under no circumstances to admit a stranger. He occupies the place next the door, with large gold-clasped prayer-book before him, and, unless when occasionally dosing a little during a lengthened sermon, he appears as devout and attentive in his manner as the greater part of the congregation. His daughter, elegantly dressed, is at his side, and beyond her, with his large earnest eyes fixed upon the clergyman, is Maurice Somers, her pale young cousin. Why does Sir John Alison regularly attend divine service on Sundays? Assuredly not to learn what he thinks that he knows already; assuredly not to confess to God the sins that never trouble his conscience; to return thanks for earthly blessings, which he regards not as coming from above, or to ask for spiritual gifts to which he attributes no value.

Sir John comes to church because it is respectable to do so ; because he thinks it well to set an example to the lower orders ; or, perhaps, simply from the force of habit, powerful in one of his nature.

It is not thus with Albina. She attends the service from a vague idea that it is her duty to do so. Her conscience, such as it is, would not be altogether easy were all forms of religion neglected. But that conscience is easily contented ; the tax which it exacts is not a heavy one. One chapter of the Bible hurried over in the morning, attendance at church once every Sunday, and occasionally on week-days, if no better engagement offer ; a little money bestowed in alms to the poor, with whom she never comes into personal contact, are sufficient evidence to Albina that she is in the sure path to Heaven. The very means of grace blind her to the absence of grace. So that her person be found in a place of worship, she thinks it no sin to mock the Searcher of hearts, by making His house a very temple of all the vanities of the world ! While her form assumes a posture of devotion, through Albina's mind passes one

unbroken stream of the most vain and frivolous thoughts. Scenes from the theatre, opera airs, the last dress which she wore, the last tale of gossip which she heard—such are the subjects of her meditation, while the voice of earnest prayer is rising around her to God. Albina is at this moment rather annoyed by the audible responses of Maurice so close at her side. By turning her head, rustling her dress, giving little impatient coughs, she would afford him hints that she is worried and disturbed by the low murmur of his voice. The boy, in the simplicity of his devotion, does not understand, or perhaps notice these hints of his sensitive cousin. In joining the prayers that he knows so well, in feeling himself one of God's great family of visible worshippers below, and invisible worshippers above, Maurice has lost for awhile his sense of loneliness, and finds that peace which is sweeter and purer than the joys of earth.

But my story remains not at present with the baronet or with his family. My subject is the jewel which they have lost.

Mrs. Brown, on this Sunday morning, has exchanged her dark silk dress for a flounced one

of brilliant green, her lace cap for a gaudy bonnet, and in the red shawl which enwraps her broad shoulders, set in a most lead-like imitation of silver, we recognize the magnificent gem which cost Gilbert Alison his life.

Mrs. Brown is not arrayed for church; it is probable that she has never entered such a building since the day of her marriage. She is dressed in her best for a Sunday "ploy," a merry expedition into the country with the family and a large party of friends. A van has been hired for the occasion, drawn by two tired horses, whose drooping heads and bending knees seem to plead for one day of rest in the seven. The van is already almost filled with a jovial party of young men, plentifully supplied with cigars, and by gaily-dressed, laughing girls, whose loud, merry voices resound along the street. All are ready and eager for the start, only waiting for the landlady herself, who, with umbrella, and large heavy basket which needs the support of both hands, is stopping at the door of the "Green Lion," to give some last order to the bar-maid.

"Come, Missus, come; we should have

been off half-an-hour ago," cried one of the party from the van.

"I bring that as is worth waiting for," was the reply. "Just lend a hand here to lift up the basket."

"Nothing forgotten? All right? Sandwiches, bottled stout, pigeon-pie, and all?" shouted a youth from the box.

"Let her alone for that," cried another; adding, with an oath, "she's the one to look after the victuals; the gen'ral what keeps an eye to the commissar'at."

"Are there oranges?" inquired one of the girls.

"Oranges! Bless you! Why, no; it is too late in the season for oranges," said the stout landlady, on the point of mounting to her seat, a feat not to be accomplished without some exertion.

"They're not out yet, for I ate one yesterday; and there's nothing like them in a hot day like this. As good luck will have it, here comes a man with a basket of oranges."

Mrs. Brown, a good-natured woman, again placed on the pavement the foot which she had

raised to the step of the van, and, turning round toward a thin, bent man, who approached with his little merchandise, she began chaffering for a cheap supply of the mellow fruit.

While she was engaged in disputing the point whether fourteen or sixteen oranges should go for a shilling, and the merry party in the van were cutting jokes with each other, or urging Mrs. Brown to despatch, a pale young man, in black coat, and white neck-cloth, who was passing along the narrow way, stopped for a moment, and surveyed the group with a hesitating air.

"A parson;" "No, a city missionary;" "One of your saints," went the whispers round the van.

"He'll be a giving us tracts," giggled a merry girl; and scarcely had the words passed her lips, when, as if mustering up courage for an effort, the gentleman crossed the street, and went up to the conveyance.

"Would you accept from me a little Sunday reading, my friends?" was his courteous address to the party.

One or two hands were stretched out to

receive the paper which the young clergyman offered, but the next minute the action was followed by a derisive laugh from the occupants of the van, and the tract was flung back to the giver.

“Keep your trash for them as wants it,” cried the landlady, as, assisted by her companions, she struggled up to her place.

“Mind your own business, and leave us to mind ours,” shouted the youth who had thrown back the tract.

The driver, with a sharp crack of the whip, now gave the signal for moving on; the jaded horses, with convulsive start, set the heavily-laden vehicle in motion; the van rattled over the stones, and soon, with the gay party which it carried, disappeared from the view.

The clergyman sighed, and stooped to pick up the tract from the dust on which it lay. His feeling was not anger, but sorrow, at the insult offered to religion in the person of its minister. “Yet have they all souls, immortal souls,” he murmured, as if to himself. “Oh, could they but realize the fact!” Here was a man who could recognize the value of a jewel, however

coarse and repulsive the setting in which it appeared.

As Mr. Manton turned to depart, his eye fell on the poor vender of oranges, who was wistfully regarding the rejected tract. The clergyman offered it with a smile, and this time it was thankfully accepted.

"Thank you kindly, sir," said the man ; "my wife likes and I like such reading as this."

"Then I trust, my friend, that you are one who seek to know and serve your God. Yet I grieve to find you breaking one of His commandments by selling fruit upon Sunday. Do you not remember the law, '*Remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy*?'"

"Ah, sir ! but the like of us can't keep it. I'm a poor man—a very poor man ; I can't give up my Sunday trade."

"It would be difficult for you to give up," said the clergyman, very gently ; "God knows how difficult it would be. But Christians through all ages *have* given up, and *are* giving up, things dear as a right hand or a right eye for the sake of the Master they love, remembering that He left the throne of heaven, and

gave His blood and his life for them ! And never did one saint or one martyr think at the last that he had given up *too much* for his God."

"It's all very true, sir," said the man, with a sigh ; "I learnt all that at my Sunday school. I always went to school as a boy ; but I can't see my sick wife want, sir, and I don't think the good God will be hard on us for doing something to get a bit of bread upon Sundays."

"Have you forgotten the promise, '*Trust in the Lord, and do good ; dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed*' ? Do you think that the God of Truth and of Love is unable or unwilling to keep that promise, or that you will ever have real cause to regret having trusted and obeyed your Creator ?"

The man looked hesitatingly down at his basket. "You see, sir, I gains more on Sunday than on any other day of the week."

"If you gained treasures of silver and gold you would still be a loser," said the young clergyman earnestly. "For '*what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange*'

for his soul ?” And leaving these most solemn words of Scripture to sink into the poor man’s heart, the minister turned and went on his way.

“How much easier it is for such as he to serve God than for me,” thought the orange-seller, as he sadly took up the basket which he had put down during the preceding conversation. He little knew that Edward Manton was at that time on the point of completing a sacrifice greater than any that he himself had ever been called upon to make. On the following day, the young clergyman would bid farewell to father and mother, all the delights of a happy home, all the comforts of civilized life, to carry God’s message to the heathen in Africa’s deadly clime. A bitter parting was before him; and every minute of the last day which he might ever spend with his family was precious to a loving, gentle spirit. Yet could not Manton pass on, like the priest and Levite in the parable, and see a brother sin, without at least an attempt to save him. He was one who sought in faith to *sow beside all waters*—to let pass no opportunity of doing his Master’s work.

His few words—his little tract—were as seed sown in a grateful soil. When Manton, toiling in a far-distant land, had forgotten entirely his conversation with the seller of fruit, the poor man was blessing the day when he had met one who cared for his soul, and was finding by joyful experience, as so many have done before, that “*Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*”

THE LOST JEWEL.

And leaving these most solemn words of Scripture to sink into the poor man's heart, the minister turned and went on his way.

How much easier it is for such as he to "leave the man for me," thought the orange-blossomed saint, took up the basket which he had mentioned during the preceding conversation.

It was now that Edward Manton was at the close of the year of completing a sacrifice of his own life, that he himself had ever been known to make. On the following day, the young clergyman would bid farewell to his dear mother, all the delights of a happy home, all the comforts of civilized life, to carry a message to the heathen in Africa's deadly clime. Another parting was before him; and yet, none of the last day which he might yet spend with his family was precious to a young noble spirit. Yet could not Manton stand by and see the priest and Levite in the parable, see a brother sin, without at least an attempt to save him. He was one who sought in faith to *see beside all waters*—to let pass no opportunity of doing his Master's work.

His few words—~~but these words~~
sown in a grateful soil. What a joy
in a far-distant land. His words
conversation will be remembered. A
man was blessing the world. A man
who cared for his soul and the
joyful experience of his life.
that "Godliness is profitable unto all things,
having the promise of the life to come."
that which is to come.

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CHAPTER VII.

THE PLEASURE EXCURSION.

THE Sunday excursion was exceedingly enjoyed by Mrs. Brown and her companions. Nothing could be more propitious than the weather, or more lively than the company, who dined together on the fresh green sward, in a pretty part of Surrey, distant eight or ten miles from London. One of the party had brought his flageolet in his pocket, a dance was proposed, and kept up with spirit, Mrs. Brown, after a due amount of laughing and pressing, joining in it herself, to the great amusement of her companions. Tired at length even with pleasure, all sat down in a circle on the grass, and the sound of uncorking bottles, and the jingle of crockery, mixed with that of laughter, and jest, and song. Many a tale was told, many a joke went round, the supply of stimulating beverage was liberal, spirits grew wilder, voices more hilarious, and the sun was sloping low towards

the west before the circle broke up, and its members prepared for a homeward journey.

The bare-ribbed horses that had been permitted to pick up a meal from the grass, again were harnessed to the van; glasses and plates were repacked in the basket; broken victuals, corks, orange-peel, and empty bottles were left scattered about on the ground, memorials of the rural feast. There were more noise and uproarious mirth on the return than there had been on the first setting out. One of the young men, who had probably partaken too freely of the contents of the basket, insisted on driving, mounted the box, and lashing the lean horses to their utmost speed, raced every vehicle pursuing the same road. One dog-cart, drawn by a stout bay pony, especially excited the emulation of Tom Bolton. Whip and shout to his pair as he might, he was distanced by the fast-trotting nag. The light conveyance easily swept past the heavily laden van. Its driver looked back with a smile of triumph.

“Never mind, Tom; give it ’em! we’ll be up with the dog-cart yet!” roared one of the

dozen heads eagerly thrust out from the latter conveyance.

“Ten to one upon Tom! Don’t spare the whip, my boy. Never let one wretched pony beat a carriage and pair!”

“Bless me, what a jolt!” exclaimed Mrs. Brown; “we’ll be over as sure as I’m alive!”

On the road, some twenty yards before them, a slight elevation betokened a bridge, which spanned a willow-bordered stream, flowing at no great depth below. The bridge being rather narrow, it was an object to the racers to be the first to gain it, as it would be a matter of difficulty for the one vehicle to pass the other upon it.

And here fortune seemed to favour the van, for a sudden gust of wind, as he neared the bridge, blew off the straw hat of him of the dog-cart.

A simultaneous cheer burst from the larger party, as the man reined in the stout bay pony, and hurriedly sprang to the ground: it was repeated as the van, with its two panting horses, passed him triumphant in the race.

“Now’s your time, Tom, or he’ll be up with us—over the bridge—quick!”

Over the bridge, indeed, but in a very different sense from that intended. Scarcely had the cheer died on the lips of the jovial band, when the eager and half-intoxicated driver dashed one of the wheels of the van against the low parapet of the bridge. Off came the wheel with a tremendous shock, down came the horses, floundering in the dust, and, as if whirled from a gigantic sling, half of the passengers were flung out, and suddenly, to their extreme amazement, found themselves struggling in the river.

A scene of confusion ensued, such as baffles description. Horses kicking, men swearing, women shrieking, shouts from the bridge above, cries for help from the stream below—terror, anger, pity, wonder, mingling in one loud babel of sounds! When the effect of the first shock had subsided, the scene afforded more of the ludicrous than of the tragic to the eye. None of the party had been killed, none very seriously injured; the bridge was low, the stream not deep, and the water had broken the fall.

Sprains, bruises, and cuts, there were indeed, sufficient to cause no small amount of tears and bewailing from the weaker sex, but fainting there was none. The sudden plunge into the cold waters, while it sobered the more excited, acted as a powerful antidote against the usual effect of a shock to the nerves. The men struggled first to the bank, and helped out their dripping, half-drowned female companions, and the bolder spirits soon found subject for merriment in what had caused such alarm.

"Well, Mrs. Brown," cried Tom Bolton, as grasping a willow-branch with one hand, he extended the other to the gasping landlady, "I hope you're none the worse for your flying leap, and cold-bath gratis!"

"None the worse," was the indignant reply, as soon as the choking voice was able to speak—"none the worse, with the breath a'most knocked out o' me, my mouth filled with mud, and my bonnet smashed all to pieces!"

"Lucky it wasn't the head that was in it instead."

"And look at my best shawl," exclaimed Mrs. Brown, dragging after her, as she splashed

up the bank, a long trail of what once might have been red barége, but material of which it would now have been impossible to recognize. Her whole figure, as she stood, half-covered with mud, and dripping with water, her crushed bonnet only hanging by its strings, while a clotted mass of grizzled hair fell over her flushed face and thick shoulders, presented so comical an appearance, that Tom Bolton could not refrain from laughing.

“I tell you what, Tom Bolton,” cried Mrs. Brown, fiercely, “you’re the last man in the world to laugh, for it was all along of your driving that we was pitched over the bridge, and if ever I sits behind when you take the whip again, why, may I never drink anything but water all my born days—ugh! I’ve had enough to-day to last me all my life!”

The party were now able to ascertain the full extent of their misfortune. There was a cottage at a short distance from the spot where the accident had occurred, and at this assistance was sought, and not in vain. The widow who dwelt at the cottage, and who was preparing to attend evening service with her young daughter,

gave what aid she could to the travellers. Cuts were bound up, bruises anointed, and some of the women's soaking garments partially dried before a fire. As the good woman prepared some warm beverage for her shivering guests, she ventured to drop a few words about "honouring the Sabbath," and God's mercy in saving them all from death. It is to be feared, however, that her words made little impression on her thoughtless hearers. To them the most serious question was how they were to return to London, as there seemed no means of repairing the van, and one of the horses was too much injured to be taken any distance that evening. The other horse was mounted by Tom Bolton. Mrs. Brown in vain endeavoured to hire the dog-cart, whose owner had an appointment in another direction, which neither regard for her offers and entreaties, nor compassion for her piteous condition, would induce him to break.

At length the party, looking strangely different in their soiled, tattered, travel-stained, and half-wet state, from what they had done in the morning—shivering, grumbling, and finding fault with every one and everything, set out on

foot for the great metropolis. Long, indeed, appeared the way, the night was closing around, and many a complaint of exhaustion was made, many a heavy sigh was heaved, ere Mrs. Brown and her companions reached the region where the sight of suburban villas and gas-lamps served to cheer their drooping spirits. A conveyance was at length procured, and respective homes reached late at night, where the tired travellers found the rest and refreshment of which they stood greatly in need.

It is doubtful whether one of all those who had taken part in that Sunday excursion felt thankful for the deliverance granted them from sudden and violent death. Many a loud exclamation which had sounded almost like prayer had been uttered in the moment of danger, but nothing approaching to thanksgiving had been heard when the danger was past. The whole affair, after the first few hours of discomfort were over, was regarded simply as an adventure, something to be talked over, and laughed over every time that any of the circle met together again for a Sunday party of pleasure. It was a theme on which Mrs. Brown loved to

dilate, a more than thrice-told tale never thought tedious, with which the stout landlady amused her guests in her little parlour behind the bar. When describing, with good-humoured philosophy, the injury which her wardrobe had sustained, how bonnet, shawl, and flounced dress had been irretrievably damaged in "that unlucky stream," Mrs. Brown seldom thought it worth while to mention that her new gew-gaw, her "Irish diamond," had been lost in those flowing waters.

Was she the first—will she be the last—to throw away the Atma, the jewel, unprized and unknown, in choosing her own way, and following her own will, in defiance of the Fourth Commandment?

CHAPTER VIII.

LIFE'S CHANGES.

YEARS flowed by, even as the stream in which the Atma lay hidden. Sometimes the diamond was carried down some little distance by the swellings from autumn rains—sometimes it lay deep imbedded in the soft ooze; but whether the river sparkled in the laughing sunshine, or caught the dark shadow of a passing cloud—whether summer fringed its banks with wild-flowers, or winter wrapped them in an icy shroud—there beneath it, unseen by the eye of man, lay the precious jewel, uninjured by the waters or by time.

It is not thus with man. Time leaves visible footprints amongst the dwellings of the sons of Adam. He moves unseen as the tempest, but, like the tempest, his course may be tracked by shattered branches and scattered leaves. Let us see what changes three years

have effected in the circumstances of the various characters in my tale.

Dermot occupies a place in a lunatic asylum, and his family are burdens on the parish. What a world of misery is contained in that single sentence ! The habit of intoxication has in Dermot's case, as in that of thousands, resulted in madness ; or, rather, was he not mad when he first indulged in it, was he not mad when he threw away all that prevents life from becoming a burden, and death a terror, and time after time deliberately drained the cup which he knew to contain poison to body and soul ?

The poor orange-seller has learned by faith to cast all his cares upon God, assured that God careth for him. He has made *trial of His love*, and has found that it never faileth. On Sundays he and his wife are never absent from the house of prayer, and return from it to a small but comfortable room, where peace is found, though wealth be not there. He is strengthened and refreshed for the labours of the week, and God's blessing rests on those labours.

The young missionary is pursuing in a distant land the noblest warfare in which man can engage—he is rescuing souls from the dominion of darkness, idolatry, and woe—souls that will be his *joy and crown of rejoicing* through ages that shall never end; he is seeking out jewels in the dark gloomy mine which has hitherto been closed to the daylight, and the unfailing promise shall be his, *They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever!*

Maurice is no longer the shy, timid boy that he appeared on his first introduction to the reader. Three years at a public school have tended to develop his physical powers, as well as to strengthen and form his character. He is still, however, much given to pensive thought, with, perhaps, a tinge of sadness in his disposition not natural to his age, but accounted for by early trials, lonely position, and a keen sense of his state of dependence. Except when amongst school companions, Maurice stands as much alone as when first he arrived, an orphan, in London. His uncle extends to

him such protection and aid as the baronet deems fitting from the head of a family to a needy relative ; but this, Maurice feels, is owing less to benevolence than to pride. The boy regards his uncle with gratitude as a benefactor, but not with affection as a friend ; and reproaches himself that he cannot love more where he owes so much.

Maurice's Christmas vacations are spent in London, his Midsummer holidays at Grandmont Hall. He always remains at school during Easter, for Albina "would not know what to make of a boy during the bustle of the London season." Maurice, however, is unobtrusive, and gives little trouble to any one. He sits by a window with his book, and if he makes his own reflections on what is passing before him, he seldom expresses them aloud. Perhaps Maurice would be a greater favourite were he to think less and speak more.

Albina cares little for her cousin. To her he is but a specimen of a most uninteresting species—that of schoolboys at home ; a curious specimen, perhaps, with something in him besides Latin grammar and taste for hockey and

cricket, but still only a boy, and below much regard, until jacket and cap shall be doffed for other and more manly habiliments.

But to Maurice the baronet's daughter is an object of singular interest. She is to him as a dream of beauty, an embodied poem; but it is a dream without substance, a poem without significance or point. Albina does not appear to her cousin to be governed by the same laws as other reasonable beings. She seems to have no duties to perform, no responsibilities to bear, no object on earth but to enjoy! Life is assuredly no battle-field to her, for her most serious cares appear to be about the fitting of a dress—her worst troubles about the fading of a flower! No strong passions ever visibly ruffle the smooth expanse of her mind, which seems formed to reflect back nothing but the roses which fortune has clustered around. Albina is neither envious nor unkind; she does wrong to no human being (except in retailing light tales of gossip, in which she takes singular pleasure), but active, self-denying benevolence is to the young beauty utterly unknown. One might deem that she regarded poverty and grief but

as fictions invented by fancy. To Maurice she seems like a fair maiden of the golden age, transported by some fantastic spell into this working, every-day world.

"A smile for your thoughts," cried Albina one morning, as, raising her eyes from some flowers which she was arranging in a vase, she caught those of Maurice fixed upon her with a look of deep and searching interest.

"I was thinking of my book," replied Maurice, instantly withdrawing his eye.

"Your book? Oh!" said Albina, in a rather incredulous tone, "and what is your book, may I ask?"

"It is Ondine."

"Ondine, ah! I remember that I read it so long ago that I have had time to forget all about it. What is the subject of the story that makes you look as if you were puzzling at a problem in Euclid, and thought that the solution was written in my face?"

"It is about a lovely creature," answered Maurice, "a kind of water-fairy—very beautiful, indeed, to look at, but wanting—wanting a soul!"

"Those German tales are so charmingly imaginative," said Albina, grouping her sprays of many-tinted verbenas; "an English writer would never have thought of such a fanciful being!"

"Not Shakespeare?" suggested Maurice.

"Well, Shakespeare has charming fairies, hiding in blossoms, dancing in the moonshine, feeding upon honey and dew. I wish that we lived in the days of fairies," added Albina, in an altered tone, "that there might be some spell to discover where my precious Atma lies hidden!"

"Ah! the jewel which was lost on the night when I first saw you!"

"The most unfortunate night of my life!" exclaimed Albina, petulantly snapping off a twig of myrtle. "What has become of the gem I cannot imagine. It was too large to be easily overlooked, and too precious to be easily disposed of. It was advertised in every direction, and a fortune was offered for its restoration. I never knew my father so dreadfully annoyed as he was by the loss of the Atma. I never venture on the subject in his presence, so dearly he valued the jewel!"

“It may be found yet,” observed Maurice.

“Never,” said Albina, with a little sigh—
“never till the days of the fairies return.”

Maurice, during his terms at school, never heard either from his uncle or his cousin; he had never seen the handwriting of either on a letter addressed to himself. He remained, therefore, from vacation to vacation, in absolute ignorance of anything that might be occurring in the family during his absence.

“You are likely to come in for a wedding, I see, Somers,” observed an usher, one morning, about a fortnight before the commencement of the midsummer holidays, glancing up from a daily newspaper which he held in his hand.

“How—what—my cousin?”

“Here it is, headed ‘fashionable intelligence.’ ‘We hear that the Right Honourable Lord George Eardston, third son of his Grace the Duke of Portington, will shortly lead to the hymeneal altar the beautiful daughter and heiress of Sir John Alison, of Grandmont Hall, in the county of Surrey.’”

What a new subject for thought and conjecture was here afforded to Maurice! Albina

was about to confide her happiness to another, whose character and principles would naturally influence her own. What kind of man must he be who had succeeded in fixing the fickle fancy of a girl like Albina; who had taught her to love, and whom she must vow to obey? Maurice found it easy to picture to himself his cousin as a bride, decked out with Brussels lace and orange-blossom, receiving with a conscious smile the homage which she always claimed as her due; but how would she appear as a wife, a matron, the responsible mistress of an establishment? Would it be with her, as Tennyson describes in some of his most beautiful lines—

“ Love took up the harp of life, and smote on all the
chords with might—

Smote the chord of *self*, which trembling passed in
music out of sight!”

Would marriage with her, as with Ondine, give to the soulless a soul, raise higher qualities in a nature whose faculties had hitherto been so entirely bounded by the present?

Such were the reflections of Maurice, though the youth of fifteen could scarcely have given them a definite form. He tried in vain to re-

member having ever seen, or having even heard the name of the accepted lover of his cousin. But then there were so many who sought the smiles of the baronet's daughter, and Maurice was so seldom at his home, that this was no matter of surprise. Never before had the boy so intensely longed for the vacation. A bright, gay episode in life appeared before him, and one that excited his liveliest interest; for Albina, with all her indifference to him, held a place in the affections of her youthful relation. His boyish admiration of her beauty was tinged with a feeling of romance, and Maurice would have dared much and suffered much for her who would not have sacrificed one of her bright ringlets to secure the happiness of his existence.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BRIDE.

GAILY and joyously shone the summer sun on the emerald turf and the stately timber of Grandmont Park, darting bright rays through the foliage, and scattering myriads of diamonds over the expanse of the ornamental water. Gaily and joyously beat the heart of Maurice, as he first caught sight of the lodge at the entrance. He had his little bridal offering at his side, his little congratulatory speech on his tongue, and he looked forward to a merrier vacation than he had ever yet spent under the roof of his uncle.

The gate of the park was wide open; the gatekeeper's rosy-cheeked children were at the door of the lodge, Maurice thought that they appeared to be on the look-out for some one. That the "some one" was not himself was very evident, when, at the first glance of his hired conveyance, the children ran back into

the lodge exclaiming, as if in disappointment, "Oh, father, it is only Master Maurice!"

"Only Master Maurice!" laughed the boy to himself, as he was driven down the long shady drive, which gave to Grandmont an air of seclusion as great as if it had been a hundred miles from the capital; "then a guest more important than Master Maurice is expected, doubtless the Right Honourable Lord George himself; and Albina will be fluttered at the sound of my wheels, and perhaps run to the great bay window to see a dusty fly with a piebald horse, and no one in it but Master Maurice! Ha! I suspect, however, that the intended is not far behind me," he added, as bending out of the window he perceived a gay yellow chariot just entering the park behind him. "They come on at a fine pace, as though the horses were pricked on by the young lord's impatience. I've the start though—a good long start. What fun to be racing the bridegroom! I guess I'll be first at the hall, though it's he who will gain the prize."

Sir John's residence was now in sight; a large and handsome edifice, though one which

an architect could hardly have surveyed with pleasure, for a modern front in the Italian style, added by the present baronet, harmonized ill with the gray towers of the more ancient part of the building. To Maurice's eye this front was a disfigurement; he preferred the low corridors, the narrow turrets, the mullioned windows of that part of the hall which his imagination could people with the forms of knights and ladies of the olden time; but Albina spoke with horror of gloomy cells, and crumbling wall; and would have swept away, had she had the power, all the dull remains of ages past, to replace them by a palace airy and bright as that of Aladdin.

Maurice was right in his conjecture that his humbler vehicle would be the first to reach the stately entrance of the baronet's mansion, but the yellow chariot was close behind him. There were several servants waiting, as if in expectation, on the broad flight of steps, shaded by a lofty portico, which led up to the open door. No amount of vanity, had Maurice possessed it, could have deceived him into the idea that the gay-liveried servants were waiting for

him; every eye was bent on the yellow chariot, and the head-servant had even the audacity to motion to the driver of the fly to move further on, without giving its occupant time to alight, that the more favoured vehicle might dash up to the entrance without a moment's delay.

"Rather cool," muttered Maurice; "these pampered fellows are looking out for their tips, and know the difference between a duke's son and 'only Master Maurice!'" Curious to see the bridegroom, without waiting for menial attendance, the schoolboy opened the door of his coach for himself, and sprang out just in time to see the expected one emerge from the yellow chariot.

The astonishment of Maurice was great when a withered old man, dressed in black, with spectacles and a gold-headed cane, slowly descended the carriage steps. Maurice was about to burst out into a merry laugh at the ludicrous mistake which he had made in supposing the venerable gentleman to be the chosen of Albina, when something in the aspect of the servants crushed his mirth in the bud, and it

was changed into a very different emotion when Mrs. Wells, the housekeeper, suddenly ran out from the hall, terror and grief depicted on her face.

"Oh, sir!" she exclaimed to the new arrival, wringing her hands as she spoke, "you are too late, all is over!"

"Gone?" anxiously inquired the physician.

"Just expired in her father's arms!" exclaimed Mrs. Wells, bursting into tears.

Had a thunderbolt exploded at the feet of Maurice, it could not have startled or shocked him more. His brain seemed turning round, the hall was swimming before his eyes, his tongue was unable for some moments even to frame a question. A confused murmur of voices was in his ear, but he could not understand their import. Mrs. Wells noticed how much the youth was overcome by the sudden and most unexpected tidings, and led him, scarcely conscious where he was going, to a small room which opened into the hall.

"Dead! Albina dead!" exclaimed Maurice, sinking into a chair; "I think this must all be a dream."

“ Ah ! Master Maurice, you may well say so ; it’s like a dream to us all. There was the wedding-cake ordered, and the wedding-dress came just last night down from London, and there are boxes and parcels lying in my room, all full of wedding presents, I’ll be bound ; but she’ll never open them, poor dear ;” and again the housekeeper melted into tears.

“ But how was it ?—what could have caused ”——

“ I’ll tell you all about it, Master Maurice,” said Mrs. Wells, drying her eyes, and seating herself with the air of one who has a long story to tell. “ You see, Elizabeth hadn’t given satisfaction ; didn’t dress Miss Alison’s hair to her taste ; you know, poor dear, she was particular about her fine plaits ”——

“ Oh, never mind—never mind,” exclaimed Maurice, impatiently.

“ A new maid was engaged ; Margaret Miles was her name ; she came from London, with a four years’ character—high recommendations ; but, you see ”——

“ What has all this to do with my cousin’s illness ? ” cried Maurice, with some irritation.

“It has everything to do, Master Maurice; all this misery and trouble has come along of that Margaret Miles. The wicked wretch never told us that she came straight from a house where two of the lodgers had died from malignant fever; no, not a word of it she said, or would have said, till she was taken with the illness herself, and then all came out as a matter of course.”

“And Albina, my cousin” ——

“Was she not terrified at the bare name of the fever! poor dear, one would have thought that she had known what was a-going to happen. And was not Sir John furious angry! The girl was turned out of the house that hour, everything burnt that she had touched; but it was too late, too late—Miss Alison had caught the infection!”

“What has become of the girl?”

“I don’t know, and I don’t care; she deserves to die fifty times over!” exclaimed the indignant housekeeper; “was it for such as her to bring sickness and death into a fam’ly like this? The only daughter—the heiress of the fortune! Sir John is just like to go mad. He’s

been stamping and storming up and down his room all the morning; not content with Dr. Peterborough here, he's sent for two physicians from London—you saw one arrive"——

"And Lord George, the betrothed?"

"He happens to be in Cumberland, making some arrangements with his fam'ly there, I believe; it's a wonderful great fam'ly, you know; but Lord George ain't the eldest son, and it's thought"——

"What fearful news for him to receive!"

"Ah! sir, you may well say so; but the young get over these things; it's the old, the old as feel the longest, when the staff they leaned on is knocked away. And Sir John was so proud of her, he was; and it's all come so sudden upon him. But yesterday she was as well as I am, and as bright as any blossom in the garden; it was wondrous quick—the fever! From last night, when she was taken ill first, she never was conscious for one moment."

"Oh, Albina!—poor Albina!" groaned Maurice, leaning his arms on the table before him, and burying his face upon them.

CHAPTER X.

THOSE LEFT BEHIND.

HAD Maurice been a person of importance—had his life been esteemed of much value by others, he would hardly have been suffered to remain an hour in a house which had been visited by a deadly and infectious disease. But the boy had no watchful father, no tender mother to feel anxious care on his account, and the orphan remained unfearing and unharmed, where death had just smitten down youth and beauty in their joyous prime.

Maurice wandered listlessly through the lofty and splendid apartments, scarcely realizing the truth of the awful event which had occurred. He stood in Albina's exquisite boudoir. There was her marker in the unfinished novel, her music-book open on the piano; the flowers in her vases were beautiful still, while the hand that had placed them there lay stiff and cold in its shroud. Maurice instinctively listened for

the rustle of her dress, the light touch of her fingers upon the piano, the well-known tones of her voice. He started when the summer breeze stirred the muslin curtains, as if it must be her hand that had softly drawn them aside. There were heavy feet moving above; the sound was painful to Maurice; through the open window he passed out on the terrace, and down into the spacious garden. Never had the parterres looked more brilliant. There was something sickening to the soul of the youth in their very brightness and beauty. The doves were cooing from the grove, the bee humming amid the blossoms, the butterfly gaily fluttering where the heliotrope scented the air. To think

"That thou should'st die,
And life be left to the butterfly!"

was the feeling that swelled the heart of Maurice.

The youth saw nothing of his uncle during the weary days that preceded the funeral; he only received a message from Sir John desiring him to open and answer any letters that might arrive at the Hall. The task was one of the

most difficult and painful that could have been inflicted on Maurice. He hated the sight of the post-bag, heavy with letters, black-edged and black-sealed, containing tender condolences, anxious inquiries, and sympathy with a father's grief expressed in every form and style. Friends bade the bereaved baronet take comfort from remembering the virtues of his "now sainted child," "the sweet blossom, too lovely for earth," "all angel now, and little less below." Maurice sat resting his aching brow on his hand, the ink drying on his suspended pen, as he attempted, feelingly yet without violating truth, to answer such letters as these. Might not friends be right after all—might not harmlessness be counted as holiness, the buried talent bring a heavenly blessing? Alas! Maurice could discover no Scripture warrant for believing that living for self and the world can lead to the enjoyment of heavenly delights.

The day of the funeral arrived. Sir John did not attend the mournful ceremony. Lord George had been expected at the hall; but in a letter, full of strong expressions of grief and despair, the bereaved bridegroom described him-

self as too ill to undertake the journey to Surrey.

“It’s not illness, but the fear of it, as keeps him away,” said the indignant Mrs. Wells, when she heard of the excuse. “The young lord has no mind to put himself in the way of the fever. Take my word for it, he’ll be married before the year is over.”

Nothing that could give solemnity to funeral pomp was omitted, when the mortal remains of Albina were carried to the family vault. There were the stately hearse, the nodding plumes, the velvet pall fringed with snowy white, the long line of empty carriages; for Grandmont Hall was sufficiently near to London to enable many a friend and acquaintance to pay an ordinary mark of respect to the dead, to gratify the feelings of the living. Slowly wound the melancholy procession along the beautiful carriage drive, under the waving boughs of the trees rich with their summer foliage. The deer in the park stood at a distance to gaze; the rooks rose heavily on the wing, as scared by a sight so unusual. A crowd had collected at the gate by the lodge; but though many a mur-

mured word of pity for the "poor young lady" was spoken, not one in that crowd could weep as for the loss of a benefactress, whose smile would be missed, whose kind counsels remembered in cottage homes where she had scattered blessings.

Maurice followed the hearse, a sad and solitary mourner. His heart bled for his uncle, the now childless and joyless man, whom grief had disabled even from attending the funeral of his only daughter. Sir John, however, appeared on the following morning at the breakfast-table. His hair was, perhaps, a little grayer, his voice a little more nervous than usual, but otherwise there was nothing to mark the week of suffering through which he had passed. To the surprise of his nephew, the baronet began at once to converse upon the weather, the crops, the school examination—anything, everything but the subject which must have lain nearest to his heart. All reference to the past was avoided; no word of sympathy would have been endured, even its tone would have given annoyance. "How differently," thought Maurice, "sorrow works in different hearts."

Yes, some receive sorrow as God's angel, listen with meek submission to the message that he bears, prepare the sacrifice required in his presence, and as he disappears in the incense of their prayers, find that he has left a blessing behind him. Others make an idol of their sorrow, enshrine it in the depths of their hearts, close their ears to the voice of consolation, and mourn even "*as those without hope.*" Others, and such are mostly those of worldly and selfish spirit, receive sorrow as a natural enemy, to be struggled with, wrestled down, thrust out of sight: and of these was the father of Albina. Maurice noticed that his uncle now lingered longer over his wine, filled his glass fuller, and filled it more often. The soul that is not elevated and purified by grief, is too frequently debased and hardened.

Maurice Somers soon discovered that the death of his cousin had materially altered his own position at Grandmont Hall. He was now the nearest relation of his uncle living, and might be considered his natural heir. Not that a single acre of Sir John's property was entailed, and his title could only be inherited by

his own immediate descendants; but it was probable that the baronet would adopt his sister's son as his own, and that his large fortune would, in course of time, descend to Maurice Somers. Sir John had no other near connection except Mr. Glidon, a cousin in India, with whom he had never corresponded. Maurice, therefore, instead of being regarded as a poor relation, a dependent orphan, began to be looked upon as the future master of Grandmont Hall. The manner of the household changed towards him; he was treated with greater respect; his wishes were consulted, his opinion asked; and acquaintances, who had hitherto treated the youth as a cipher unworthy of notice, began to discover in him the highest qualities both of person and of mind.

It was well, perhaps, for Maurice when the Midsummer vacation was over, and he returned to his class and his cricket again.

CHAPTER XI.

UNDER THE SURFACE.

SUMMER had given place to autumn. The sheaves had long since been carried into the garner, and over the stubble-fields hunters had ridden with hound and horn; the trees in Grandmont Park had worn the splendid tints of the waning year, and had strewn the sod, damp with autumn rains, with a carpet of crimson and gold.

One afternoon, late in October, one of those pleasant afternoons when we might almost cheat ourselves into the belief that the scanty leaves left on the trees are the first-born of spring, instead of the relics of summer, Sir John Alison, fishing-rod in hand, wandered through his spacious plantations. He was alone, a circumstance which rarely occurred, for in his wrestle with sorrow the bereaved parent now constantly sought auxiliaries in companions who loved the pleasures of the table as well as

he did himself. Sir John was not a thinking man; but the waste of solitude will often be peopled by unbidden thoughts, and therefore the baronet shunned it. What had he to think on with pleasure? His flowers of spring were withered—his summer had left no harvest—his life was now waning like the year, and cold and dark was the winter beyond.

But on this occasion it so happened that the baronet went forth alone; he slowly tracked the course of the stream that fed the ornamental water, which spread out like a little lake in front of his lordly dwelling. There was a small path by the side of the river, and along this he pursued his way, till he should fix on a spot suited for the sport in which he could still find some little amusement.

At length the baronet paused, and sat down on the stump of a tree which had been cut so as to form a rude seat, under the shade of an overhanging willow. It is probable that Sir John selected this place from the circumstance that it was near enough to the public road to afford a glimpse of passing passengers, or a faint sound of rumbling wheels. It was less

dull and lonely than the silent woods through which he had been passing. The arch of a low bridge was visible through the thinned foliage, and near it was seen a turnstile that admitted the public to a pathway which afforded a short cut to a neighbouring village through the baronet's grounds. Sir John was a good-natured man, and had been content to sacrifice a little aristocratic seclusion to earn popularity with the people around him.

The spot which the baronet had chosen as the scene of his fishing could scarcely, therefore, be termed lonely; but this day it was more quiet than usual. Only once a creaking wain slowly rolled over the bridge; the road appeared to be almost deserted. Sir John, as he flung his line into the quiet brook, was left alone with his thoughts.

His fishing was unsuccessful; the prey would not rise to the bait. Nothing appeared moving in the stream but the yellow leaves which, dropping one by one from above, floated slowly down on its surface.

"So all that I cared for in life is taken from me one after another," gloomily meditated

the angler; "only brother, only sister, only child; and I am left as bare of comfort as these branches will soon be of leaves. I could not even prize a jewel, but it must be taken away from me. I have drained life's cup very deep, and find nothing but dregs at the bottom. What remains to me now?"

What remains to thee, pampered child of fortune? Time remains yet, time to redeem the past. The barren tree is not yet cut down; the Master has not yet come back from his journey to demand an account of wasted talents; the vineyard door yet stands open; the sun is low, but it has not set. Why stand ye idly without? Grace may yet give to the worldling the heart of a little child. Grace may bend the proud knees, and free the earth-clogged spirit from bonds of corruption. The jewel may be hidden, not lost; grace may yet raise it from the depths, and make it shine in the light which grows brighter and brighter even to the perfect day.

A purer, better feeling than he had perhaps known since the days of his sunny childhood was stealing into the bosom of the world-weary

man ; a doubt whether he might not have mistaken the path to happiness, and whether it might not be possible even now to retrace his steps. Such moments probably occur in the lives of all who have been given knowledge of the truth, though they may have profited little by that knowledge ; it is as if a guardian angel softly whispered, "*Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.*"

The baronet gazed steadily, thoughtfully into the water, as if he were reading characters traced on the stones of its pebbly bed. Presently his head bent lower, and he looked more curiously into the stream. There was something entangled amidst the green water-weeds that attracted the angler's attention. Whatever it might be, it so engaged him that he did not notice that a figure had passed the turnstile ; had moved slowly along the footpath ; had stood watching him with anxious interest, and then had stolen softly over the long grass till it stood under the shade of the same willow that overhung the seat of the angler. The figure was that of a pale, emaciated woman, dressed in faded shabby habiliments, that hung loosely on

her shrunken figure. She had not the air of a beggar, though her whole appearance denoted poverty and distress. She evidently wished to address Sir John, but seemed unwilling or afraid to disturb him. Twice she leant forward, as if in act to speak, twice shrank back irresolute and fearful, and drew closer around her, with trembling hand, the threadbare shawl which she wore.

"Odd appearance! can't make out what it is!" muttered Sir John; and putting down his rod on the bank beside him, he took a broken branch which happened to be lying on the grass, and dipping it into the stream, gently stirred the weeds at the bottom.

"Sir," began the stranger, in a timid tone.

"Not like a pebble, and yet"——

"Sir!" The voice was a little louder, and the baronet turned round on his seat.

"What do you want, my good woman?"

"Oh! sir, I have been ill, very long ill; I have had to part with almost every article that I possessed, just to keep the bare life in me."

Sir John was in a softened mood; he put his thumb and finger into his waistcoat pocket.

"It's not that—not that," said the woman, hurriedly, with a deprecatory movement of her wasted hand; "it's a recommendation, sir, that's all I would ask. The family I lived with so long have gone to the continent, and I don't know when they will return; there's no one to answer for me, and I can't get a situation anywhere."

"How am I to help you?" said the baronet, a little amused at the singular request.

"Oh, sir, if you would please only to say that you received a good character with me; that Mrs. Merle"——

A flash of the truth burst on the mind of Sir John, and in a moment the quiet current of his mind was changed to one of boiling indignation. He started from his seat, faced the woman, with fury gleaming in his eyes, and in a voice tremulous with passion exclaimed, "Margaret Miles, who killed my daughter?"

"Sir, for mercy's sake, for heaven's sake, don't cast me off—don't throw me on the world; I've been so ill—I've no friend on earth." The woman clasped her hands, and looked up in his face in an agony of supplication.

“Woman, how dare you intrude your hated presence upon one whose home is desolate through you?”

“I’ve no home—no home!” sobbed Margaret. “Oh, sir, I meant no harm, and I’ve suffered so much, can you not, will you not forgive me?”

Had Sir John never heard of a debtor who, denying to another the mercy which he himself so much required, had justly incurred a terrible doom? Had he never at least appeared to join in the prayer, “*forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us?*” Was there nothing in his late meditations to remind him that he himself needed pardon for offences more aggravated and prolonged than that of the miserable woman before him?

But the feeling of resentment against one who had been the instrumental cause of the greatest loss that he had ever sustained, was uppermost in the heart of the father. The sacrifice of that resentment he would not make for the love of mercy or the love of heaven. Sternly pressing his lips together, and forbidding Margaret to follow him with a frown and gesture

more expressive than words, the baronet turned on his heel, and strode along the path on his homeward way, without another thought given to the treasure which had actually lain within reach of his hand.

Was he the first—will he be the last—to lose the Atma, the jewel, from the indulgence of vindictive passion?

CHAPTER XII.

THE COTTAGE MAID.

It was with anything but a kindly eye that Margaret watched the receding figure of the baronet, and anything but a blessing burst from her lips. She dashed the drops passionately from her eyes, and drew herself up erect, as one who feels more sinned against than sinning.

“He would have flung his dirty copper to a tramp,” muttered the girl, but withholds from his servant her due. He turned me out of doors, turned me out at ten minutes’ warning, turned me out in a burning fever, and now——! Well, well, the wheel’s always rolling, and they who are up to-day may be down to-morrow. He may yet know what it is to ask for pity, for justice, and ask in vain.”

Margaret was about to quit the spot, when the idea struck her that she would see what was the object in the water which had so at-

tracted the notice of Sir John. She moved close to the brink, and, looking down, she saw with her younger eyes, more plainly than the baronet had done, something that appeared like a gem entangled in the weeds below. Margaret went on her knees by the stream, drew her sleeve above her thin elbow, and, immersing her arm in the water, drew out the priceless jewel, which had lain in the brook for years.

The girl had none of the lapidary's skill in deciding on the value of stones. Her judgment was guided by the appearance of the setting, which was of the coarsest and commonest description.

"This must have lain there for ages," said Margaret to herself; "perhaps dropped by some old pedlar while fording the stream, before there was ever a bridge. But it's pretty enough in its way."

A more serious question than the value of the Atma now presented itself to the mind of the girl. Her pocket was absolutely empty. She had walked all the way from London to procure an interview with Sir John; but she

was now exhausted and footsore, and how was she to return? With a heavy heart and lingering step, Margaret Miles made her way to the turnstile again.

“If I could only get a little refreshment,” said the weary girl with a sigh; and she turned her gaze wistfully in the direction of a cottage, the only dwelling in view, which was the same as that from which aid had been sought by Mrs. Brown after her fall over the bridge.

A pretty inviting cottage it appeared, with ivy yet green mid the changes of autumn, clustering over the low porch, and almost concealing the latticed window. A thin column of smoke rose cheerily from the chimney, and a ruddy gleam through the diamond panes, told of a warm lighted hearth within. Margaret drew near, as if attracted by the glow, and perceived, seated on a low bench within the porch, a young and pretty girl, with a basket of work by her side. Her dress was of simple material, but made with an attention to style and the becomings, which caught at once the lady's-maid's experienced eye. Glossy light hair, rather elaborately curled, fell on either side of

a round, ingenuous face, which only wanted an expression of more intelligence to be extremely attractive. The mouth was the one feature which a critic would have pronounced defective—always a little open—and whenever the maiden spoke or smiled, displaying too much of the pearly teeth, it gave an impression, even at first sight, of a character irresolute and weak.

“Might I ask for a glass of water?” said Margaret, addressing the pretty maiden; “I have walked very far, and am excessively tired.”

Notwithstanding the shabbiness of Margaret’s attire, her manner and address were by no means those of a beggar.

“I will fetch you some milk with pleasure,” exclaimed Annie, rising at once from her seat. “Pray sit down on the bench till I come back, it is so pleasant with the warm sun upon it.”

Annie ran into the cottage, carrying her basket on her arm. Margaret saw that it was taken in as a measure of precaution, for her sharp glance had in a moment perceived that it contained something besides muslin; four bright half-crowns, just received in payment for work, lay at the bottom of the basket.

Annie soon returned with the milk and a large slice of bread and butter, which she offered with simple but graceful hospitality. She seated herself again on the bench, placing her basket at her feet, and tearing off a strip of muslin, began to lay down a hem, as she conversed with her stranger guest.

"You take in work?" said Margaret, in a tone of inquiry.

"Oh, yes; I've always liked work; and mother says I've quick fingers at it."

"Have you much employment in this place?"

"Pretty well," replied the blue-eyed Annie. "I've just made two dresses for Mrs. Wells, up at the Hall." And she glanced at the basket containing the silver.

"The Hall," repeated Margaret, gloomily. "I suppose that you were employed about Miss Alison's trousseau?"

"Oh dear, no; that was all had from London; but when the poor young lady died of the fever, I helped to make the mourning for the servants."

"Do you live by your needle?" inquired Margaret, after another little pause.

“Well, no ; mother sells poultry and eggs, and she has the cottage rent-free, so she lets me have all that I can earn for myself ; and nice little sums I make.”

“I wonder,” observed Margaret, with a smile, “how your mother can manage to keep a pretty girl like you at home.”

Annie had laid down her hem, but did not seem disposed to take up her needle. She made no reply to Margaret’s observation, but kept twirling round and round on her finger a very showy ring of yellow stones, set in the form of a serpent.

“That is a very pretty ring,” said Margaret.

“Isn’t it a beauty?” cried the cottage maiden.

“Bought, I suppose, with your earnings?”

“Oh dear, no ; it was a present from a friend.” The blue eyes sank under Margaret’s look, and a rosy blush mantled the cheek of Annie.

“Ah ! I understand,” said Margaret, knowingly ; “a friend who would like to put another ring on another finger?”

The rosy cheek dimpled ; the cottage beauty

gave a little conscious laugh, and glanced timidly round, without raising her eyes, as if afraid that the observation might have been overheard.

“Whoever chose that ring was a man of taste,” observed the quondam lady’s-maid, in the tone of one who “knows what is what;” “and depend on it, he is one who will show taste in things more important than the choosing of a ring.”

Annie simpered, but feeling, perhaps, a little uncomfortable at the turn which the conversation had taken, she reverted to the subject of her earnings.

“Though mother lets me have what money I can get, of course most of it goes to make her comfortable here. Now, I shall walk afore dark to the village, and buy her some tea and loaf-sugar, and a new ribbon for her bonnet besides. I shall trim it without her knowing, and give her a surprise to-morrow.”

“And what will you do with what money is over?”

“Well, I don’t know,” replied Annie.

“I do,” said the lady’s-maid, laughing;

you'll buy a pretty little keepsake for the friend who gave you that ring."

"Well, I never thought of that," said the simple girl, drawing the yellow serpent up and down on her finger. "It's so hard to find keepsakes for" ——

"For gentlemen; that's true. There are not so many pretty things that they are able to wear. But breast-pins are fashionable and genteel. What say you to something like this?" And Margaret drew from her pocket the Atma, which she had rubbed as bright as circumstances permitted.

"La! that's pretty," cried the admiring Annie; "but the silver don't look overgood."

"It's an antique, a regular antique gem, quite a curiosity in its way, and reckoned remarkably handsome. Why, my grandfather, who was coachman to a duke, always wore it when he drove his master to court," added the unscrupulous maid.

"La, now!" exclaimed Annie, gazing with added respect on a jewel which had figured on such grand occasions.

"Just look how it shines in the light! You

won't see such a breast-pin as this on every day of your life," said Margaret, speaking more truly than she intended.

"You wouldn't like to part with it, I suppose?"

"Well; I should need to be hard pressed to do so," said Margaret, with well-feigned hesitation; "an old family-piece like this; but I happen to be rather out of pocket just now, and I shouldn't mind, for a consideration, to"—

"I'll give you half-a-crown for the pin."

"Half-a-crown!" repeated Margaret, with affected disdain, beginning to feel the zest of an angler who has a silly fish playing around his bait—"Half-a-crown! why it cost my grandfather a bright gold guinea, if ever it cost him a penny."

Annie looked disappointed. The difficulty of procuring the antique gem increased her desire to possess it. She lifted her basket from the ground, and drawing out two half-crowns, proffered them in payment for the pin.

Margaret felt half inclined to close with the liberal offer. Five shillings for a gew-gaw picked out of the water, which she did not be-

lieve to be worth as many pence, was a temptation scarcely to be resisted. But she looked at Annie's eager eyes, she saw that she had to deal with an ignorant, credulous creature, the cupidity of her own nature was aroused, and she determined to drive a hard bargain, and wring as much money as she possibly could from the simplicity of the cottage maid. Margaret therefore shook her head at the sight of the two half-crowns.

Annie sighed, looked at the pin, then at the basket, thought of the tea and sugar, and the new ribbon for her mother's bonnet. Margaret held up the gem, so that it flashed bright prismatic tints in the sunshine.

"How beautiful it is!" exclaimed Annie.

"Any lord might wear it," observed Margaret, "it's fit for the crown of a king."

Annie slowly, hesitatingly, drew a third half-crown from the basket. "Perhaps you would let me have it for this?" she said, with a doubting look.

Margaret felt her fish nibbling at the hook, but it was not time to jerk up the line.

"It would be throwing it away, it would

indeed," she replied, "I could get more from any jeweller in London."

"It would please him so much," murmured Annie, scarcely audibly, fixing a longing eye on the jewel.

"Well, I'll tell you what," said Margaret, with the air of one who is resolved, at any cost, to do a generous thing, "I'll let you have it for ten shillings, and that's a bargain, I can assure you."

"I can't afford to give so much as that."

"Oh, dear! I've no wish that you should; I only meant to oblige;" and Margaret rose from her seat, tightened her shawl, and seemed in act to depart. "I am much obliged to you for the sup of milk, and I wish you all happiness, my dear, and I hope that you'll find something to please as much as this antique gem."

Margaret turned as if to go, but took care not to stir from the spot.

"It's such a love of a pin!" exclaimed the regretful Annie.

"You'll not have such another chance," said Margaret, moving a step, only one step, from the porch.

“You shall have them, you shall have all the half-crowns!” cried Annie, pouring the whole of her little treasure into the hand of her unscrupulous companion.

Margaret chuckled inwardly at her success, but betrayed no outward sign of exultation. The exchange was quickly made, and the unprincipled Miles proceeded on the road to London, jingling her silver in her pocket, and laughing to herself at the credulity of the “poor fool,” whom she had “so cleverly taken in.”

Who was the fool? who was the loser? who is ever the loser when conscience is bartered for lucre? The deed of Margaret is repeated every day, every hour; it is repeated every time when by falsehood or fraud the purse grows heavy with unrighteous gain. Little cause have the winners to exult, little cause to rejoice, when they have thrown away the Atma, the jewel, to secure the perishing riches of earth.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WOOER.

ON the following day we find Annie Laver seated, not in the ivy-covered porch, but within the cottage ; the door carefully closed, perhaps to keep out a sharp wind which has risen since the last night, perhaps to ensure privacy, for Annie is not alone, and a third party would be an intruder.

The cottage looks as comfortable within as it appears pretty without. The brick floor is scrupulously clean, the utensils hung above the fire-place are bright, and the whiteness of the little muslin curtain might rival that of new-fallen snow ; a goldfinch is singing in the window a blithe enlivening lay ; there are a few books, neatly covered and well dusted, on a table beside the wall ; a large black family Bible occupies the principal place, and beside it are such works as the " Pilgrim's Progress," Baxter's " Saints' Rest," and " The Whole Duty of Man."

Annie's face, which was so sunshiny yesterday, is, like the sky without, clouded over to-day. Nay, there are red marks round the pretty blue eyes, and a nervous movement of the rosy lips, which betray a mind ill at ease. A very good-looking and well-dressed young man is sitting beside her, holding her hand within his own, and playing, as if unconsciously, with the serpent ring, which the girl still wears on her finger.

"We ought not to think of it any more; mother won't hear of the marriage; she was talking so about it to me yesterday evening, that I couldn't sleep a wink all the night."

"Your mother's a"—

"Now don't; don't you say anything against her; she's been a good mother to me," murmured Annie.

"She's good enough in her way, rather *too good*," cried the young man, with impatience. "But the old dame gets such ridiculous crotchets into her head, that she can't understand reason when she hears it."

"Some one has set her against you, Martin Warren."

"I dare say, I dare say; some of the old crones who talk scandal over their tea, think all the world sinners, and themselves saints and angels of course; but you don't believe them, Annie?"

"Mother has heard"——

"I should just like to know what she has heard. A pack of lies, I'll be sworn."

"She has heard that you keep company with men who are given to change—Socialists I think she called them; people who want to unsettle everything in the land."

"I'd settle you, and for life," said Martin, gaily; "and as for change, I wish some one to change her name, I own; but there's no great harm in that wish." Annie could not refrain from a smile.

"Then they say that you seldom or never go to church."

"I'll go to church readily any day, when it's to be spliced to a pretty little wife."

"How can you talk such nonsense!" said Annie, but a merry dimple belied the reproof.

"Any more crimes and misdemeanours?" asked Martin.

"Mother has heard that you attend meetings."

"Meetings! why, so does she."

"Oh, but hers are missionary meetings."

"Mine are just as good as hers, and a great deal jollier besides."

"But, Martin, there is worse said against you. Mother has heard"—the words came out with hesitation—"has heard that you do not care for the Bible."

"This is just the cant of the day, the miserable cant of the day!" exclaimed Martin, flourishing his disengaged hand with oratorical emphasis. "Old folk wrapped up in prejudice, walled up in prejudice, buried alive in prejudice, can't conceive that what does very well for one generation don't do at all for another. They'd have the wheel move always in the old rut, the pipe play always the old tune, the coat be always cut to the same old-fashioned pattern. What did the men who lived thousands of years back know of the electric telegraphs, and the railways, and the locomotives, and the steam horse-power, and animal magnetism, and a thousand wonders besides? Why, they knew

just nothing at all ; it's been all progress since, don't you see?"

"I see," replied Annie, with a very indistinct idea of what she was called upon to see. She was bewildered by a flow of frothy words, and could not comprehend to what point they tended. One single impression was left on her mind ; "how clever he is!" thought Annie.

"But you," continued Warren, in a less excited tone, "you are a sensible, clear-headed girl, you've no nonsensical prejudices to blind you ; you are content to take as your partner through life one who adores you, and you only ; and you will like him none the worse because his free soul refuses to be cramped and crushed down under the chariot-wheels of old superstition."

"But what am I to do?" cried Annie, falling back upon the difficulty from which she had started at first. "Mother says she won't give her consent."

"Then we can marry without it."

"Oh, Martin!" exclaimed Annie, making a feeble attempt to withdraw her hand from her lover's.

"Tush! it's what is done every day, and no harm comes of it neither. The old can't judge for the young; the old have no business to tyrannize in matters which it is impossible that they can understand. If I had not a penny in my pocket now—if I and my family were likely to come on the old dame for the necessaries of life, why I could see some sense in her objection—she might be allowed a voice in the matter; but this is quite a different case. Suppose that you marry in spite of what your mother and all the old cronies can say:—you're pleased, I'm pleased, and all the rest of the world may go to—the North Pole, say I."

"It would break mother's heart!" sighed the girl.

"Hearts are not so easily broken," laughed Martin Warren, "especially old tough ones, my dear. As soon as the knot is tied she'll come round, and be quite reconciled to the business. She shall have a nice little room in our snug little house, be waited upon like a lady, wear a silk dress and kid gloves, and I'll wager my life that in a month she thinks the

marriage of her daughter the luckiest thing that ever befel her."

"It seems so very wrong"——

"Oh, well!" exclaimed Warren, with a theatrical burst of despair, "if my happiness is a matter of such supreme indifference to you—if you will venture nothing, give up nothing for one who is ready any moment to die at your feet, I have been deceived all along—I have thrown away my ardent affections on one who cannot appreciate, and will not return them."

"How poetical he is," thought Annie.

"I had not believed you capable of trifling with me—playing on my feelings—ruining my peace—destroying my happiness"——

"No, no!" interrupted the girl, laying her hand on his arm.

"But I perceive that I have been mistaken. While your image is never absent from my thoughts, I have no place in yours"——

"You are very unjust to me, Martin!" exclaimed Annie, her eyes filling with tears; "it was only yesterday that"——and without concluding her sentence she turned to her basket,

and drew from it the breast-pin which she had purchased from Margaret Miles.

"That's a stunning jewel!" exclaimed Martin Warren, dropping his poetry in his surprise.

"Mother said that I had thrown away my money; but *you* like it?" asked Annie, timidly.

"It's a jewel—a jewel that cannot be surpassed, except by the jewel who gives it. And you really meant this for me?"

"Perhaps mother might—would"—

"Annie," exclaimed Warren, half-dropping on one knee, and pressing the girl's hand to his lips, "if I accept this gem, this precious gem, I'll wear it to my dying day; it shall be buried with me in my coffin. But I will accept it but on one condition:—That pin is a pledge of your faith—that pin must go with your promise: if the jewel be mine, you are mine—mine for ever, though all the world should join together to keep us asunder."

He released her hand; there was a brief, painful pause—duty on the one side, love on the other, trembling in the balance of decision. Then suddenly rising, Annie held out the gem

to her lover, and bursting into a flood of tears, ran hastily out of the cottage.

Was she the first—will she be the last—to throw away the Atma, the jewel, from letting the heart's idolatrous affections overpower reason, conscience, and religion.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MOTHER'S WOE.

AGAIN we must pass over the events of more than three years, and find ourselves at the end of that period of time in front of a small but neat dwelling, in one of the suburbs of London.

A woman, youthful in appearance, and very tidily dressed, has just swung back the low gate of the miniature garden, where tiny hedges of box divide parterres not much larger than samplers. She goes up to the door and knocks, and almost immediately knocks again, as if impatient of delay; while she carefully shields with her shawl, from an almost impalpable drizzle, the child whom she carries in her arms.

The door is opened by a small servant-girl, who may have numbered some thirteen years.

"Sarah, is your master at home?" asked Annie, anxiously, as she entered her little dwelling.

"No, ma'am; mas'r's been gone out this half-hour."

"Where was he going?" inquired the wife, quickly.

"Please, ma'am, I think he be going to a meeting."

"Did he tell you when he would be back?"

"He took the latch-key with him, ma'am; he said he mightn't be back afore midnight."

"And he could not even wait to hear what the doctors said of his child!" exclaimed Annie, bitterly, to herself. "Poor darling! poor darling!" and she pressed the child closer to her heart.

"And please, ma'am," continued the girl, following her mistress up the narrow stair, "the genl'man lodger wanted to speak a word with you as soon as you came in, ma'am. He said he wished to hear all about baby's poor eyes."

The door of a small sitting-room unclosed just as Annie reached the landing-place, and the missionary, who was introduced in a previous chapter, appeared at the entrance.

His form looked taller, perhaps because

thinner, and his complexion, previously pale, had the sickly hue which residence in an unhealthy tropical clime produces. The auburn hair was thinned above his broad expansive brow; but he had now more of the serene dignity of an ambassador from God; and such benevolence shone in his deep blue eye, that no one who met its gaze could doubt that the soul whose feelings it mirrored overflowed with good will towards all mankind.

“I fear that you have no favourable account to give me,” he began, as he read the mother’s look of distress.

Annie entered the room, and sat down. She was weary, anxious, and her heart was so heavy that she longed to disburden it of its sorrows to some friendly ear.

“The doctors say there is no hope—nothing can be done—my poor babe will never see the blessed light!” The large tears fell from the mother’s eyes as she spoke, and dropped on the little boy who slept on her knee.

“Then, Mrs. Warren, let us bow to the will of God, and pray that more blessed light may shine on the soul of your child. Better, oh,

how unspeakably better, darkness without than darkness within! God can shed brightness, and hope, and joy into the heart, even though the eyes be sightless."

But Annie refused to be comforted. "This is a miserable world, a most miserable world!" she repeated, rocking herself to and fro on her chair. "We seem brought here for nothing but trouble. If we are happy for a little space, something is sure to come, and make our very lives a burden."

Mr. Manton looked gravely at the speaker for a moment, and then, taking a chair, he seated himself opposite to her. During the short period that the clergyman had lodged at the house of Martin Warren, he had had cause to suspect that religion was little known under that roof. Twice had Mr. Manton attempted to speak on the subject to his landlord, and Warren had shown a levity which had confirmed his lodger's suspicions; but the young man was so little at his home, that opportunities of addressing him were rare. The gentle acquiescence with which Annie had listened to a few serious observations which he had dropped

had encouraged Mr. Manton to hope that she was more pious than her husband; but her manner and expression, now that she was smarting under the sense of affliction, betrayed a mind so rebellious against God, that the minister was pained and disappointed.

"We must not only think of our griefs, my friend," he began, after a pause for consideration; "we must not shut our eyes to the blessings showered down upon us by a merciful Father. Look at your pleasant home, your numerous comforts, the health granted both to yourself and your husband; shall we forget all this, and much more, in the contemplation of one sad trial?"

"I have many trials," exclaimed Annie, now sobbing aloud.

Many trials! Yes: for she had that which was in itself a congregation of bitter trials. She had embarked her happiness in a crazy vessel, and found the planks giving way beneath her; she had rested her hopes on a reed, and wondered to find it breaking; she had given her heart and hand to one whom she knew to be faithless to his God, and yet expected him

to be true to his wife. Annie had many of this world's comforts, but the serpent's trail was over them all.

Mr. Manton was not one to intrude into domestic troubles, even by the expression of sympathy. What consolation or counsels he might give could only be general in their import. He would have regarded as a species of treason a wife's complaint against the husband whom she had vowed to honour and obey. Avoiding, therefore, all inquiry into the nature of Annie's griefs, Mr. Manton simply brought before her that truth which he himself had found to be a balm for every sorrow, and, bending forward, in a low voice, uttered the brief but comprehensive sentence, "*God is love.*"

"How can it be so," cried Annie, bitterly, "when He loads his creatures with troubles more, much more, than they can bear? If God is love, indeed, why is the world so full of misery?"

"It was not our heavenly Father who brought misery into the world. Misery came from sin; misery is the shadow of sin, even as death is its consequence. But Almighty love

is for ever drawing good out of apparent evil. As the physician has the skill to make valuable medicines out of virulent poisons, so the very troubles which sin hath wrought, God's grace often turns into blessings. Trial is no real evil if it draw us nearer to Him; death itself is no evil if it introduce us to endless life."

"There are many trials that can do us no possible good. Why does God send them?" cried Annie.

"Sufferers must be careful not to impute to the Lord trials which they have brought on themselves. Probably most of the griefs which we endure we may trace to our own wilful neglect of some commandment of God. The intemperate man loses health, the thief his character, the idler his means of subsistence; the envious heart knows no peace, the covetous spirit no content; but the suffering which each endures can by no means be attributed to God. Each only reaps what he has sown."

Annie was silent for some minutes, for conscience was whispering bitter truths. She had disregarded the injunction pressed on her by a

pious parent, "*Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers ;*" she had deliberately broken the fifth commandment, and, having "*sown the wind,*" what marvel that she "*reaped the whirlwind.*" But Annie strove to escape from the painful conviction forced upon her mind, and, looking at her son, exclaimed, "You will not say that this poor child ever wilfully sinned, and yet God gives him up to a life of blindness and misery.

"A life of blindness, but not necessarily of misery. See how the Almighty has provided for the helpless lamb the comforts of a home, and the blessing of a fond mother's tenderest care. Who can say what riches of grace here, what treasures of bliss above may be laid up for that little child ! How much he may enjoy, even upon earth, till, in a happier world, his now darkened eyes shall uncloset to behold his God ! The jewels which the Saviour has redeemed from the dark mine of condemnation may, indeed, be exposed to much sharp cutting, ere ready for the mansions of light ; but no stroke is given in vain, no needless pang is inflicted ; they will not, in heaven, regret one trial,

which has only fitted the soul to shine with brighter, more glorious, lustre in the diadem of the eternal King."

Annie wept still, but more quietly.

"Would that you could cast all your cares on your heavenly Father, resting as tranquilly on His love as that little one reposes on your own! See how peacefully he sleeps, with no grief for the present, no fear for the future; he feels that a mother's arms are around him, and finds peace on a parent's breast."

"Oh," exclaimed Annie, "that I could be again as a little child! But I find comfort in nothing now."

"Do you seek it in your Bible, and in prayer?"

"I used to read the Bible in my mother's house," faltered forth the unhappy Annie; "I used to pray at my mother's side; but now"——

"You neglect the means of gaining peace, and wonder that peace is not yours."

"You do not know my difficulties, sir. At my old home I was helped on in everything, and here"——

"There is no position," interrupted Mr.

Manton, "that shuts us out from the grace of God. Temptations may hem us in on every side, but there is a way of escape left open for all who humbly and faithfully seek it."

"What, even for those who have brought the temptations all upon themselves?" said Annie, with an eager look of inquiry.

"The prodigal," returned the clergyman, "had wilfully wandered far from his father, and yet, when he sought to return, that father's arms were open to receive him."

"But I am so weak, so very weak, even if I made good resolutions, I should never be able to keep them."

"You must ask strength and grace from God, '*who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not.*' Ask in the name of Him who hath borne our griefs, carried our sorrows, and died for our sins."

As Mr. Manton concluded the sentence, Annie's child stirred and awoke. He opened his blind eyes, and smiled softly, uttering the word "Mamma!" that first sweet word which the infant learns to speak. Annie bent down her head, and pressed fond, passionate kisses on his lips.

“In giving you that dear child,” said Mr. Manton, “God has given you a sacred charge, and in executing faithfully the trust, a rich blessing may revert to your own soul. You will teach your boy, when his reason opens, his duty to God and to man; you will teach him resignation to bear his misfortunes, and faith to look beyond them to Heaven; you will speak to him” —

“Oh!” exclaimed Annie, with a burst of anguish, “I cannot speak to him of his *father’s* God.”

The words struck painfully on the ear of Mr. Manton; they at once unveiled before his eyes the misery of a weak, simple girl, who, following her own wayward fancy, had been led into a quicksand of temptation, dragged down lower and lower by the very hand that should have raised, supported, and helped her. He seemed to hear the cry of a sinking victim in the exclamation of a mother, who feared that her child might be lost through the example of his father. It was a difficult case in which to speak comfort, and it was some time before the minister felt himself able to reply.

“Do all that lies in your power to bring up your child for God, and leave the result to Him. Sow, although it be in tears, trusting to reap in joy. Let trials, whatever be their source, but drive you closer to the footstool of grace, and make you more earnestly watch, pray, hope, for yourself, for your boy, and for his father.”

On that evening, Annie Warren unclosed her Bible for the first time since her unhappy marriage, and pondered, and wept, and prayed over its pages till a late hour in the night, for she sat up till her husband's return. She only paused in her occupation to hush her little one to rest, or to put back the window curtain, and look forth to see if Martin were coming up the road. The rain pattered loudly against the pane, the wind howled drearily in the chimneys, and shook the casements till they rattled again. The church-clock had struck midnight before Martin Warren returned. Annie recognized him through the darkness rather by his step than by his form. She ran down the stairs, and met him in the hall, just as he had entered by his latch-key. Warren shook the drops from his wet umbrella, and noisily stamped

upon the mat to knock the mire from his boots. Annie could see by the light which she carried that his face looked marvellously ill-tempered.

"The fire's yet alight in the kitchen," she said timidly; "won't you warm yourself, dear, after being out in such a wet night?"

"I was a fool for going out in such a night," exclaimed Warren, without answering her question; "and precious little I have got by going. One of the rascals has robbed me."

"Robbed!" ejaculated Annie.

"Yes, robbed!" repeated Warren with an oath. "My handkerchief's gone, and my purse—lucky it held nothing but silver—and the pin's gone, with the false diamond head, that which you gave me before we were married."

The gem had once more been thrown away by the folly of one who knew not its value. Was Warren the first—will he be the last—to lose the Atma, the priceless jewel, by frequenting Socialist meetings, by mixing himself up with democrats and sceptics?

CHAPTER XV.

A CLOUD OF CARE.

ON the following morning, as Edward Manton had just concluded his simple breakfast, and was about to quit the lodging to visit an invalid friend, he heard a gentle tap at his sitting-room door, and his landlady entered the apartment.

Mr. Manton supposed that Annie had come to receive orders about household arrangements, but a glimpse of her pale, anxious face, and the disordered attire of one who was remarkable for neatness, made him aware that something painful had occurred.

"Anything the matter with your boy?" inquired the missionary, kindly.

"Oh no, sir, not with Neddy; but I'm so very uneasy about my husband. He's always so early, sir, going to his office; but this morning he's not got up at all, and he complains of such terrible pain in his limbs, and, altogether, he's not like himself at all, sir."

"Would he like to see me?" asked the clergyman, rising.

"Well, I don't know, sir—I'm half afraid"—, and Annie stood uneasily pulling off and on the yellow serpent which she wore.

"Had you not better send for a doctor?"

"Martin can't abide doctors," faltered Annie; "he was so angry just now when I spoke of one; and he is in such a way because he can't get to the City; I'm sure I don't know which side to turn," said the young wife, with an anxious sigh.

"Perhaps he would see me as a friend, and if it seem to me needful that he should have medical advice, I might persuade him to send for a doctor. Remember," added the clergyman, in a cheering tone, "remember the password which I gave you yesterday—*watch, pray, and hope* for all."

"I'll tell him you're coming, sir," said Annie.

Mr. Manton followed her at a little distance, and as he set his foot on the highest step of the steep stair, heard an irritable voice call out, from the interior of a room, "I'll have no-

thing to do with parsons!—send for the parson when you send for the undertaker—both are birds of a feather.” The missionary, satisfied that the sick man was in no mood to receive a visit, descended the staircase, and re-entered his own sitting-room, where he was soon after joined by Annie.

“Oh! sir, what’s to be done about the business? he’s in such a worry and fret about it.”

“What business do you mean, Mrs. Warren?”

“He’s clerk to a manufacturer in the City, sir, and he can’t get to his work, and Mr. Barnes will be awful angry, and not know what keeps him away.”

“Would you not write?”

Poor Annie looked perplexed, and shook her head with a doubtful air. “I don’t think Mr. Barnes would care for a letter,” she said.

She might have added that to herself it would have been a terrible task to have written one.

“Shall I go and speak to the manufacturer myself?”

“Oh, sir, if you only would, he’d listen to

a gentleman like you;" and the anxious face brightened with a gleam of comfort.

Edward Manton took up his hat, and set off at once for the City. . He had no difficulty in finding out Mr. Barnes' office, and was introduced to a smoke-dried, beetle-browed man, whose hard features seemed cut out of wood.

"Very ill, did you say?"

"I have not myself seen him, but from the report of his wife, he is utterly unfit to attend here to-day, and his involuntary absence from his duty preys upon the poor man's mind."

"He'll be here to-morrow, I suppose? Irregular attendance is mighty inconvenient, it's a thing I never put up with."

"Unless," said Mr. Manton, gravely, "in the event of those casualties to which we are all liable ourselves. I cannot promise you that Warren will be here to-morrow, but that he will come if it be possible to do so."

"Well, well, we must give him a day or two's law, I suppose; but he must make a short job of his illness, or we must make short work with his place."

Mr. Manton returned to his lodging a good

deal wearied, for his strength was easily exhausted, as he was in England solely on account of broken health. Necessary business had detained him near London for a week, but he was on the following day to return to his father's home in Surrey, where, in the pleasant seclusion of the country, he might repair his weakened constitution, and prepare for new labours abroad.

He found Annie anxiously awaiting his return, with her child, as usual, in her arms.

"My husband's worse!" was her exclamation on seeing the clergyman, "his mind seems wandering, he says such strange things,—what shall I do? Oh, what shall I do?"

"You have, of course, sent for a doctor?"

"I was afraid," said the poor, weak girl, "Martin was so much against it this morning; it might make him angry if he knew it afterwards."

"Send Sarah at once for the doctor," said Mr. Manton, decidedly; "I take all responsibility on myself, and I will be answerable for the fee."

He then proceeded himself to the sick man's

chamber, and found him in the agonies of rheumatic fever, utterly unable to attend to, or even to understand, anything which the clergyman might say.

"He'll be better to-morrow, sir, won't he?" cried Annie, who had followed Mr. Manton, and who now stood trembling with anxiety to be confirmed in what was rather a wish than a hope.

"His recovery will take time—we must be patient—hopeful," added the clergyman; "we will hear the report of the doctor."

Returning to his own apartment, Mr. Manton wrote two letters: one was to Mr. Barnes, eloquently pleading that some temporary arrangement might be made to prevent the long illness which was inevitable from utterly ruining the prospects of the clerk; the other letter was to Edward's father, postponing his own departure for Surrey.

"I could not leave that poor, helpless, young creature," thought Manton, "so ignorant of the ways of the world, so fearful of any responsibility, to meet this terrible trial undaided."

But for the support given to her by the clearer judgment and firmer mind of her lodger, poor Annie would have been utterly crushed under the miseries of the next six days. Mr. Manton relieved her of no inconsiderable part of the night and day watch beside the tortured and excitable patient. Annie needed guidance in every difficulty, support at every step. She had indeed enough to wring a heart tender and loving as hers. Mr. Barnes proved inexorable. As it was impossible that Warren, even should he recover, would for months be equal to work, his situation was filled up at once. The small arrears of his salary, calculated to a shilling, were forwarded to his unhappy wife; this sum, and the little money derived from the lodging, were almost at once swept away by the necessity of defraying some heavy bills, and pecuniary embarrassment was thus added to domestic trouble. Mr. Manton did what he could to alleviate the painful pressure, but his own purse was a light one, and the aid which he could give was but small.

At the end of six days Martin Warren was pronounced to be quite out of danger; but it

was evident that it must be long, very long, before he could set a foot to the ground. His state of mind was very unsatisfactory: he listened, indeed, to the man who had helped him in his sorest need, but he listened with evident impatience. Though not yet aware of the extent of his misfortunes (for the fact of his place being lost was kept from him by the doctor's advice), his whole soul was full of fierce rebellion against the decrees of Providence. He could not always be restrained by respect for the clergyman from uttering such sentiments aloud as made Annie tremble and weep.

The poor girl's nerves seemed almost shattered by her night-watching, anxiety, and woe.

"I wish, Mrs. Warren, that you could procure some assistance," said the clergyman, as he met her one morning with a letter in his hand. "I have received news which render it necessary that I should go home early to-morrow. Is there no neighbour who would relieve you at least of the care of your child?"

"My child, my blind Neddy! Oh, I could not part with him, he is my only comfort!" cried the young mother, turning on her darling

a gaze of intensest love; while Neddy put his little hand caressingly over her face, and played with the locks of the parent whom he never could see.

“Even Martin watches him with pleasure as he begins to trot about the room, so prettily! Oh, I knew that my husband was better when he began to take notice of his child. Just now I lifted baby on to the bed, to give Martin his morning kiss, and the boy called out ‘Papa,’ quite clear, just as if he knew him, poor darling. And his father said, ‘God bless him!’—yes, sir, indeed, I heard Martin say ‘God bless him!’” and the eyes of the poor young wife swam with hopeful tears.

“But still the nursing is heavy upon you. I should leave this place with a more satisfied mind if I knew that some experienced friend were near to help you.”

“Oh, if I had only my mother!” sighed Annie.

“Would she not come to you in your need?”

“She would come, I am sure she would come; but Martin’s so bitter against her; he

dislikes her particular ways. I dare not mention such a thing to my husband."

"Shall I speak to him on the subject?" said the clergyman, who felt how valuable, how almost necessary, to Annie, would be a mother's counsels and support. Manton had lately accidentally discovered that Annie was the daughter of a parishioner of his own father, and what he knew of the character of Mrs. Laver made him - the more anxious to re-unite her to her child.

The poor girl's face brightened at the proposal. "Please, sir, do so. You know so well how to speak a word just at the minute when he will bear it. But not now," she added, quickly, "not till he has had his forenoon sleep; he always wakes up more quiet."

"When I come in from my walk, I will talk to him," said Mr. Manton.

As Annie returned to the sick-room of Warren, he received her with the question, "Annie, have you heard nothing from Mr. Barnes?"

She started at the abruptness of his manner, looked perplexed, and unable to reply.

"Of course you sent him word that I was

ill, to account for my absence from the office?" The tone was sharper than before.

"Well, I believe—I think—Mr. Manton"—

"Answer me straightforwardly and at once, and don't stand stammering like a fool. Does he know that I am ill—yes or no?"

"Yes," replied Annie, timidly.

"And will he keep my situation for me—yes or no?"

"No," faltered the trembling wife.

Warren would have started up in his bed, but his limbs were powerless from the effects of his illness. His voice, however, seemed to have lost none of its strength, as he exclaimed, "You don't mean to say that he has filled up my place?"

Annie's tearful silence was sufficient reply. Warren's loud, angry accents had startled his blind child, and the little one began to cry.

"Take away that whining brat," cried the father fiercely; but as Annie was about to reply, and carry Neddy out of the room, she was roughly called back by her husband.

"Was nothing done, nothing attempted, to

save me from this ruin?" asked the miserable man.

"Oh, yes," said Annie eagerly; "Mr. Manton went twice or three times to the City on purpose, but"——

"Mr. Manton is a lumbug," exclaimed Warren, quite carried away by his passion. "I dare say he's been denouncing me to my employer as an infidel, because I won't be led blindfold like himself. You must go yourself, and at once."

"Oh, Martin!" exclaimed Annie, with an appealing look of distress, "I never should know what to say. I never was clever as you are."

"Cleverness! The woman is out of her senses. I married an idiot, indeed, if I married a girl who could not speak a word for her husband."

"Shall I just wait till Mr. Manton comes home?"

"Wait! You have waited much too long already. Put on your bonnet at once, and don't take that heavy boy with you, as if you could not cross a street without having him clinging to your neck."

Annie had no choice but to obey. She dressed hastily for a walk, her fingers trembling so as to render it difficult to fasten the strings of her bonnet. She then carried Neddy downstairs, and, calling her servant girl, Sarah, gave over the child to her care.

“Mind you watch him closely, very closely. Remember, poor lamb! that he is blind; and he is getting so active on his feet, that he needs more looking after than ever. And see that master does not want his beef-tea, and that the fire does not go out in his room. Oh, Sarah, remember what a charge I leave to you, until I come back to them again!”

The girl looked sullen and cross. She had not been engaged, she muttered, to look after a child; and as for entering the room where the sick man lay like a chained bear, ready to snarl and snap at whoever approached him, no one would willingly do that.

CHAPTER XVI.

A WEARY WAY.

ANNIE felt utterly bewildered as she set forth on her hopeless errand. She was almost as little suited to find her way in the bustling streets of London as one of the lambs taken from her native meadows might have been. She was afraid to ask her way, and still more afraid of losing it. At length she was hailed by the conductor of an omnibus, which was proceeding, half empty, along the road. The poor girl had a vague idea that omnibuses went to the City, and partly from this notion, partly because she never knew how to say "No," Annie took her place in the conveyance without ascertaining its destination. Full of her difficult mission, endeavouring in vain to frame such an address as might move the stony heart of Mr. Barnes, Annie took little notice of the road through which she passed. At length, raising her timid eyes, and glancing through the opposite win-

dow, a suspicion crossed her mind that all might not be right.

"I wonder if we are near the Bank," she murmured, almost as if to herself.

"The Bank, bless your heart! Why, this is Bayswater!" exclaimed a stout gentleman, who was seated opposite; and, pitying Annie's look of dismay, he called to the guard to stop the omnibus.

Annie was so much excited and agitated as she descended from the vehicle, that she could scarcely manage to find a solitary sixpence which she happened to have with her; in her flurry at starting she had quite forgotten her purse. She was so long fumbling in her pocket to find this sixpence, hidden amongst keys, pin-cushion, housewife, nutmeg scraper, and bits of toys, that the guard almost lost patience at the delay. The coin was drawn forth at last, and the unhappy Annie, as the conveyance drove off which had taken her miles out of her way, turned to recommence her long walk to the City, on what she felt to be a desperate errand.

That walk seemed almost interminable; and yet, weary, frightened, bewildered as she was,

Annie was less wretched than on the day when, in the bitterness of her spirit, she had poured out her griefs to the missionary. He had spoken to her of casting all her cares upon a heavenly Father, resting on His love as her beloved child rested upon her own; and this image had constantly since recurred to her mind with a comforting and soothing power. "I am as blind as my babe in spiritual things. Oh, that the Lord would lead me by the hand!" was the desire that unconsciously formed itself into prayer, and with the prayer came some measure of peace to the weary and tempest-tossed soul.

The short winter-day was beginning to wane before Annie, pale with exhaustion, trembling with excitement, stood at length in the dreaded presence of Mr. Barnes, the man who appeared to hold in his hands the fate of her husband. Annie's tongue seemed to cleave to her mouth, and it was some moments before she could make intelligible to her stern, repulsive-looking auditor who she was, and on what errand she had come. His reply was brief, cold, decided. He was sorry that she had troubled herself by

making such an application; thought that she had understood that all connection was closed between himself and Mr. Warren. He reminded her that he had her own receipt in full for the last three weeks' salary; and he closed by wishing that her husband might make a good recovery.

Annie clasped her hands, and her silent tears would have spoken with more eloquence than words to a spirit less hard than that of Mr. Barnes. But cold and unmoved he stood; the only sign of feeling which he evinced being a sensation of relief when the door of his office had closed behind the unwelcome supplicant.

"Oh! what is to be done! how shall I ever get home! what will Martin say!" exclaimed the poor young wife, as she found herself again in the bustling thoroughfare, almost distracted by the noise, and bewildered by the sight of crushing, crowding vehicles.

How inexpressibly welcome at that moment was the sounds of a familiar voice!

"Why surely that must be Annie Laver!"

It was years since she had been called by that name, and when, hastily raising her eyes,

she perceived a tall, slight young man, elegantly dressed, and wearing moustaches, she scarcely recognized in him the schoolboy Maurice Somers, who had occasionally called at her mother's cottage to purchase from her fancy rabbits or poultry.

"Oh! sir! to think of your meeting me here!" The poor girl became so much agitated at seeing one who reminded her of the peaceful home of her childhood, that Maurice perceived at a glance that the disobedient daughter was not the happy wife.

"You look dreadfully weary and worn, Annie—Mrs. Warren, are you far from your home?"

"About four miles, I believe, sir," answered Annie, mentioning the place of her abode.

"You were not thinking of walking such a distance. My cab is just round the corner; I will drive you to your house, and you shall tell me on the way how you are getting on in the world, and what message I should carry to your mother, for I return this evening to Grandmont."

The relief to Annie's worn-out frame was not greater than that which her weary mind experienced, as she accepted the kindly offer.

It seemed as if a friend had been sent to her at the moment when she most required one. As Maurice in his light elegant vehicle threaded the labyrinth of streets, guiding with skill his spirited horse through the concourse of carts and carriages, Annie in a few broken words told him of the illness of her husband, and of the blindness of her son. She then, in faltering tones, asked him for news of her mother.

"Better than she was last winter, decidedly better. Mrs. Laver goes about now, and manages everything just as she did before she was ill."

"Ill!" exclaimed Annie, with a look of distress; "I did not know that mother had been ill! Oh! who was there to nurse and take care of her?"

"The good old neighbour who lives next the school was very attentive to her, and Mrs. Wells saw that she wanted for nothing." Maurice might have added, had he chosen to do so, that he had himself carried many a little delicacy to the cottage with the ivy-mantled porch. "But you have not the slightest cause for feeling uneasiness now," he added, kindly, "Mrs. Laver has completely recovered."

“How I wish that I could see her! No one could help me in my trouble as she would: mother always knows what is best to be done.”

“Do you not think that she would come to you if you asked her?”

“Perhaps,” said Annie, mournfully and doubtfully, “though I have not seen her since—and I don’t deserve—and I am afraid my husband”——

“Get his consent to her coming, and I’ll be answerable for hers,” said the young man, who knew how the mother’s heart had yearned over her weak and undutiful child, and who was satisfied that any resentment which might linger there would be quenched by the knowledge that her daughter was sad and suffering, sought her forgiveness, and needed her aid.

Maurice then tried to divert Annie’s thoughts from her own trials, by such little pieces of intelligence from her native village as were likely to interest his companion. He told her of the new organ and various improvements in the church, and of the playground just opened near the school; he informed her who had died, and who had married—all which intelligence was

perfectly new to Annie, for neither she nor her mother were scribes, and they had not met since her unfortunate marriage. Then Annie heard how Sir John was troubled with the gout, and seldom visited London; how Mr. Glidon, a cousin from India, had been for some weeks a guest at Grandmont;—and so the time passed rapidly away, and Annie found herself before she was aware at the gate of her little garden.

“If you would honour me, sir, by walking in,” she said, after simply expressing her thanks to Maurice Somers.

“I fear that I must decline your kindness; I should feel myself an intruder in a house of sickness; besides, it will soon be growing dark, and I have a long drive before me.” Raising his hat courteously to the daughter of the humble cottager, the young heir of Grandmont shook his reins, his splendid horse bounded forward, and the elegant cabriolet was soon out of sight, whirling rapidly towards the south of London.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE GAMBLER'S FORTUNE.

WE have too long lost sight of the gem, the fate of which forms the connecting thread of this story.

The Atma has now fallen into worse hands than any whose touch have polluted it yet. Jem Jodril, or, as he is more usually called by his companions, Sneaking Jem, or Gambling Jem, has by that sleight of hand in which he prides himself, whether in connection with a pocket or a pack of cards, made himself possessor of the jewel at the Socialist meeting which Martin Warren attended.

Jem Jodril is tall, sallow, repulsive in mien, with an eye which ever avoids meeting another, a low forehead, and ill-shaped head, covered by a mass of coarse black hair. His dress varies according to his success in the evil line of business which he pursues. Sometimes Jem appears in such guise that the instinctive judg-

ment of a passer-by would be, "There goes some ruffian let loose from jail, whom it would be very undesirable to meet alone in a lane at night." At other times the gambler will show himself to the world dressed in the extravagance of fashion ; for Jem has a taste for finery, and is well-pleased to saunter down the street with rings on his fingers, gay studs in his shirt, and a gaudy chain very ostentatiously stretched across his waistcoat. He has then a cigar between his lips, and his hat cocked jauntily on one side, and he assumes somewhat of a swaggering air ; unless a policeman be seen in the background, whose presence he as instinctively avoids as a rat might that of Grimalkin.

Jem Jodril examined his spoils by the light of a gas-lamp, in a low disreputable lane in London. Finding that Warren's purse contained nothing but a little silver, he uttered a profane curse on its late possessor, and proceeded to examine the Atma. As a preliminary precaution, to avoid its ever being identified, Jem broke off the long pin attached to it, and removed with his knife every particle of the worthless

setting. As soon as he had done so he was struck by the beauty and brilliancy of what he had at first suspected to be but a tawdry ornament, stamped by its very size as something valueless and vulgar.

"If this is a false diamond," he muttered with an oath, "it is precious like to a real one." He turned it in every direction. "It can't be real, or that cove wouldn't ha' worn it. I doubt there be sich a diamond in the world, save that ere big one of the Queen's, and"—Jem stopped suddenly, glanced round with lips apart and eyebrows elevated as if in surprise or fear. No one was near, no noise had startled him; it was the thought which had flashed through his mind that imprinted its stamp on his coarse features. Eagerly Jodril looked again at his prize, as if his faculties were concentrated in the examination of what he held in his hand.

"It was six or eight years back, I mind it as if 'twere yesterday, great papers patched in every window, stuck upon every lamp-post, offering a reward—and sich a reward!—for a diamond—and just like this! But who offered it—there's the hitch," and the thief rubbed his

forehead as the seat of memory, but pondered and rubbed in vain.

“Could I sell it, such a jewel as this, and be a made man at once? No, no, the beaks would be after me in no time, have me up as they’ve had me many a time afore, and it’s six months in limbo, hard work, no pay, as I’d get for finding the diamond! The honest game is the safer. But I can’t, for the life of me, remember who it was as lost the jewel, or I’d go to him at once; he’d take it gladly; there’d be a good round sum down, and no troublesome questions asked.”

Three difficulties presented themselves to the mind of the thief. How to discover whether the Atma were a real jewel or a false one; whether, if real, it were the diamond whose loss had been advertised; and, should he be satisfied on these two leading points,—how to find out the name of the gentleman who had offered a princely reward for its recovery. After much cogitation and doubt, Jem Jodril decided on taking it to Ben Slater, a sharper of his acquaintance, who, under cover of a pawnbroker’s business, was an extensive receiver of stolen goods.

“Ben’s sharp as a needle, and knows all about ’em sort of valuable things. I’ll try him, but I’ll not trust him,” thought the thief.

On the following day Jem Jodril stood in a small dark shop, where light found its way rather through the door than the window, encumbered, as was the latter, with a most heterogeneous collection of ticketed articles,—the poor man’s blanket, the minstrel’s bandoline, well-thumbed volumes, bundles of old spoons, ancient china, dirty articles of dress, blocked up the dusty panes, over which hung the emblematical three gilt balls.

Ben Slater’s appearance was in keeping with that of his shop. He was a wizened, shrunken man, who, like the wares in his window, seemed to have seen his best days; with sharp nose and chin approaching each other over the chasm of the sunken mouth, and eyes keen and restless as a weasel’s, looking sometimes through, but more frequently over, the blue-steel spectacles which he wore. There was not a man in London reckoned “more ’cute,” or “more up to a dodge” by the light-fingered gentry, than Benjamin Slater.

"What should you say that this is worth?" asked Jem, holding out the Atma for inspection, but taking care not to trust it for a minute out of his own hand. He watched the face of Ben Slater, as the pawnbroker carefully and ponderingly examined the jewel through his glasses, but the wrinkled face betrayed no emotion. The old man then raised his head, and returned the scrutiny with interest, reading the dark countenance before him, as he might have perused a book.

"Where did you pick up this?" asked Ben Slater, in a peculiar, mysterious tone.

"That's neither here nor there," replied Jem, assuming an off-hand manner, "the question in hand is this, what will you give me for it?"

"Five" —. The pawnbroker paused, and looked hard at Jem Jodril.

"Five guineas, eh?" asked the thief, closing his fingers tightly over the jewel as he spoke.

"Well—say, five pounds."

"I'll be hanged if you have it for fifty," exclaimed Jem, confirmed at once in his growing persuasion that the Atma was a valuable prize.

"You'd better not speak quite so loud, young man," said the pawnbroker, with a warning glance at the door. "If you was to be found with that gem in your possession, I'd not give a brass farthing for your chance of sleeping to-night out of jail. Sir John Alison sent notice to all the police offices the day after his young lady lost it."

"Sir John Alison! Grosvenor Square! That's it," exclaimed Jem Jodril, in triumph, "I'll be off to the gent like a shot."

Ben Slater laid his lean fingers on the arm of the thief. The pawnbroker had already made up his mind to have a share, and that no inconsiderable share, in the prize which had fallen to the lot of his companion. In low cunning and readiness of mental resource, he knew himself to be as superior to Jem, as the latter was to him in sleight of hand and physical strength. Ben drew Jodril into his small back parlour, made him sit down, and, after calling his own daughter to mind the shop, entered into close conversation with the thief. He set before Jem, with such artful skill, the difficulty of securing the reward after

the lapse of so many years, without some friend to answer for his respectability, some sharper head than his own to devise a likely story to account for the jewel coming honestly into his possession, that Jodril was glad enough to get Slater to accompany him to the baronet's house in town, agreeing to give the pawnbroker a considerable per centage upon whatever sum he might help him to obtain.

"I must make a few arrangements before I go," said old Ben Slater to his comrade, "just wait here a minute until I come back ;" and he shuffled up the creaking staircase, which led to the upper part of his dwelling.

The minute proved such a long one, the arrangements were apparently so complicated, that Jem, who was eager to start, found his patience almost exhausted. At length the pawnbroker rejoined him, and the men set out together. Jem was excited and talkative, Ben Slater very silent and observant.

They reached Grosvenor Square. The shutters of the baronet's house were closed, the men's ring was answered by a female servant. "As I expected," muttered the pawnbroker.

A string of questions from Jem were briefly answered by the maid. Sir John was not in London, was not expected there soon—very seldom came to town—was then at Grandmont—that was more than ten miles off, in Surrey.

“Now you take my advice,” said the pawnbroker to Jem, as the two turned away from the door, “winter days are short—you’ll come to my house, sleep there to-night, and to-morrow”——

“I’ll not sleep at your house, or at any other house, till I have seen Sir John,” answered Jem, with a significant wink of the eye, “I am off to Grandmont this hour.” He pulled some loose silver out of his pocket. “Not enough for a cab all the way; you’ll lend me the tin,” he said to his companion.

“Haven’t a farthing about me,” replied the pawnbroker.

“Never mind then,” said Jem, with decision, “I’ll take the ’bus as far as ’twill carry me, and walk the rest of the way.”

“If you go, I shall go with you,” observed Slater, after a pause for reflection.

“Oh! if you’re game for a walk you’re

welcome," exclaimed Jem, with a rather contemptuous glance at the withered figure of his companion.

After another futile attempt to persuade Jem to return to his house, Slater proceeded with him to the nearest point where they could hail a conveyance going in the desired direction, and the two men were set down by it at a distance of some five or six miles from Grandmont Hall.

"You'll not walk it, old fellow," cried Jem, whirling round a heavy oak stick which he carried. A grim smile was Ben's only reply.

The pawnbroker shuffled on more bravely than might have been expected from his appearance, along the dusty road, edged with leafless hedges, and dotted here and there with the dwellings of men. At length he paused and panted. "You lend me your stick," he said to Jem Jodril.

"I never part with my stick," was the bluff reply, "if you can't get on you may stay behind. Prick on a bit, or we shan't reach the place afore nightfall."

The old man had no intention that they should. He had no intention that the jewel

should ever reach the hands of its lawful owner. If he could but manage to get it from Jem, the pawnbroker trusted to his own wits to dispose of the Atma for a sum more nearly approaching its real value than any that the baronet would give. He had broached the idea of selling it to his companion, but Jem, who acted like a man fully alive to the perils of his own position, with the lynx-eye of justice ever watching his movements, obstinately kept to his resolution for once to pursue the honest and straightforward course. No one could throw him into prison for restoring a lost treasure to its owner.

"I say, Jem," commenced Ben Slater, "don't you feel rather dry?"

"Rather," replied his companion glancing around him over a dreary waste of common; "but I don't see a public near."

"I carry mine with me," said the pawnbroker, drawing a flask from one of his pockets.

"I don't care if I do wet my whistle," cried Jem; "not that I am tired, but 'twill need some pluck to go to the big house, and face the gentry. I should say we must be near to the place by this time."

"Three good miles from it," said Ben, who knew that the enclosure scarce two hundred yards before them was Grandmont Park; "let's sit down and rest for a while, for my old limbs won't carry me as they did ten years ago. Here's a nice dry bank, and the thicket behind us keeps out the north wind. And now that I think of it, there's a coach always passing this way, and just about this hour. The driver is an old chum of mine, and will give us a lift for nothing. Four legs go faster than two, so you see there'll be no time lost."

Jem was not much disposed to stop, and yet he was loath to go up to the Hall without his companion. With a little difficulty therefore Ben persuaded him to sit down, and wait for the mythical coach. The pawnbroker then handed the flask to Jodril, watching him closely, as he did so, through the blue steel spectacles. "Take a good pull," said Ben Slater.

Jem drank—but drank very little. He knew something of the character of his comrade, and his mind was awake to suspicion. "You take some yourself," he said, handing back the flask to its owner; who rubbed the mouth with

his sleeve, slowly screwed on the top-piece, and muttered something to himself which did not reach the ear of Jem Jodril.

“Your liquor’s uncommon strong,” said the thief, passing his hand across his eyes; “and your coach is long in coming; I see no sign of it yet.”

“The watched pot never boils,” replied Ben Slater; “here’s something to while away the time,” and as a last resource the old man pulled from his deep pocket a dirty pack of cards.

The eyes of Jem Jodril glistened. Here was a temptation which he had never the power to resist. The very touch of cards acted on the gambler as a spell. The excitement of games of chance exercised over him an attraction like that which draws the swimmer to the edge, and over the edge of a cataract to the yawning chasm below. Jem was soon deep in an amusement which, when indulged in to a great extent perhaps beyond all others, serves to lower the character, and debase the mind. Whether excitement had dulled his mental powers, or whether the cards had been previously tampered with, or whether it was simply the result of

chance, I leave the reader to decide, but it is certain that on this occasion Jem Jodril's usual good fortune forsook him. The cards were always against him, and in a short time he had played away the small coin which he had about him.

"I'd heard you was a sharp hand at it," said the pawnbroker, sneeringly, as he shuffled the cards, "but I'd say, from what I see of your play, you don't know an ace of spades from a knave of diamonds."

"I'm more than your match any day," cried the gambler, fiercely; "my jewel to a silver sixpence I have the best of it if we try again."

"Done!" exclaimed the pawnbroker, suddenly; and without giving his companion time to reply, he began rapidly dealing out the pack.

There was scarcely another word spoken while—the one perfectly collected and calm, the other excited and confused—the two men pursued their play. In a few minutes the game was decided. "The jewel is mine!" cried Ben Slater.

Jem started on his feet with a fierce imprecation.

“The jewel is mine,” repeated the pawn-broker, “if there’s honour in”——

“Take it if you can get it,” shouted the excited Jodril, flinging the Atma into the middle of the thicket.

The deed was no sooner done than repented of, its insanity was immediately apparent even to the strangely confused mind of Jem. Without stopping to settle the ownership of the jewel, both men instantly plunged into the thicket, each with a silent resolution to appropriate the Atma if he should be the one to discover it. Vain was their anxious search. Clothes were torn, hands lacerated with thorns, heavy toil-drops stood on each brow, though the evening was closing, and November’s chill mist was gradually spreading around. Jem actually set his heel upon the jewel, but his heavy foot only crushed it down into the sod, burying it so completely that it was impossible for human eye to detect it. Not only that evening, but day after day, the wearisome search was renewed, till passers-by stopped and wondered what the ill-favoured strangers could be seeking so anxiously amongst the thorns. Day after day, like

some alchemist of old, wasting his life over the glowing crucible to discover the philosopher's stone, Ben Slater neglected his business, to grope with ever lessening hope for the treasure he never should find; and after the pawnbroker's patience had failed, still Jem haunted the dreary spot, cursing the hour when he had madly thrown away a prize which he had proved himself unworthy to hold.

Was he the first—will he be the last—to stake the Atma, the inestimable jewel, and to find it irrecoverably lost from the ruinous vice of gambling?

CHAPTER XVIII.¹

A SUDDEN BLOW.

DURING Annie Warren's absence from her home, events had occurred which were to exercise an indirect influence over the whole current of her future life.

Sarah, as we have seen, had sullenly and reluctantly received from her young mistress the charge to watch over her blind child, and attend to the wants of her sick husband. The girl had set her heart on running to a neighbour's, "just over the way," to have a gossip with a school-companion, who was passing the day at the place. This hope frustrated, Sarah set about the performance of her duties in a peevish, irritable mood. She was angry with Neddy because he was not disposed to relieve her of trouble by going to sleep; she burnt the beef-tea which she had to heat for her master; spilt half of it in carrying it up-stairs, and, by way of not letting out the little fire which had been

lighted in Warren's sick-room, emptied the coal-scuttle upon it, and stirred it to the heat of a furnace. Fortunately for Sarah, her master was too drowsy for any strong ebullition of passion, and after grumbling a little over his spoilt beverage, quietly composed himself to sleep. Neddy, also, by dint of violent patting, and rude rocking to and fro, at length ceased to fret after his absent mother, and closed his blind eyes in repose.

"Now's my time," thought Sarah, as she laid the little child on his small mattress in the room occupied by his sleeping father. "They'll keep quiet enough for ten minutes, while I run over for a chat with Meg Wiggins."

Leaving the outer door open, as she would otherwise have had no means of re-entering the house, Sarah hurried across the road; and soon, in merry colloquy with her schoolfellow, totally forgot the bed-ridden sufferer, and the helpless little one confided to her care.

Martin awoke before long, and called for his wife; then uttered an impatient exclamation, on recollecting that he himself had sent her away. Though his limbs were still utterly

powerless, he had the free use of his arms, and finding that no one responded to his voice, Warren angrily rang his bell.

"The room is like an oven," he exclaimed, "with a roaring fire that might roast an ox!" And again and again he pulled the bell-rope, until it came down in his hand.

"There does not seem to be a living soul in the place!" exclaimed the irritated man, drawing back the curtain of his bed. His eye fell on his sleeping son. It was a sight to calm the fiercest passion. Fair as a cherub looked the slumbering child, his softly-rounded features bright with a delicate rose, his golden locks falling back from his white brow, while the little form lay folded in an attitude of grace that might have formed a study for a sculptor.

Warren gazed at the child with admiring love. But even the gentler and better feelings of the father's nature were embittered by his sceptical spirit.

"My guiltless boy—my innocent little one, slumbering there so unconscious of trouble—he will be involved in my ruin, he will be

crushed in my fall ! Let the parson talk to me no longer of the goodness and mercy of God ! Why am I stricken down in the prime of my manhood, made a misery to myself and a burden to others ; stopped in the midst of my career, and condemned to this helplessness and pain ?”

As the words left his lips, the child stirred, unfolded his little arms, stretched himself on his mattress, and softly called out for his mother. There was a smile on his rosy lips, as if he had been awakened by an angel’s whisper.

“Lie still, my boy,” said Martin Warren, “mother will soon return.”

But the blind child was not disposed to lie still. He was too young to understand his father’s words, and he held out his arms, as if to feel for her whose fond caress he instinctively sought. Disappointed in his hope, Neddy rolled himself from his mattress on to the floor, and once more, in pleading accents, lisped the word “Mamma !”

Warren again tried to speak soothingly to his little son ; but his was not the voice which

the blind child knew and loved. Neddy laid hold with his tiny hands of one of the legs of the bed, and being a strong, active child, raised himself to a standing position.

The father grew very uneasy. He found himself more helpless than an infant, left in sole charge of a child who could not understand, and would not obey him, but who was of an age to run into dangers which he had not sight or sense to avoid. Warren called again for his servant, and so loudly, that he startled and frightened his boy, who, uttering a little cry, held out his hands to balance himself, and with shoeless feet trotted off to a more distant part of the room, where he stood leaning on a cushioned chair, which happened to be in his path.

"Thank God he did not run towards the fire!" was the involuntary exclamation of the father, who had watched the movement with no small alarm. Nervously anxious for the safety of the child, Warren attempted to rise from his bed, but to do so he found impossible, and the effort almost convulsed him with pain. Wishing to lure back the little wanderer to his side,

Warren spoke to him in gentlest tones, called him by every tender name, promised him sweetmeats and rewards, and jingled the empty cup beside him, that the tinkling sound might attract the blind boy. But Neddy was not to be bribed or allured. The child had not found what he sought. He wanted his mother, and was restless until he again should be pressed to her heart. Martin perceived with horror that his little nestling was preparing for another bold flight, and that the face of his sightless darling was turned directly towards the fire.

The agony of years seemed concentrated in that moment. Helpless himself, the once sceptical Warren prayed fervently, wildly to his God. He dreaded the next moment to see his boy wrapt in flames, shrieking for the aid which his maddened father had no power to give.

The child starts on his perilous journey, unconscious of the awful danger before him, opening his little arms wide as if to embrace the burning death. With a cry of anguish Warren snatches up the cup at his side, and, with the energy of despair, flings it at the tottering child.

It strikes the little one on the chest ; he falls on the floor, crying and sobbing with terror and pain, but stopped, at least for a time, in his perilous career, unharmed yet by the fierce red flames.

A few minutes after, to Warren's unspeakable relief, he heard a quick step on the stair. Mr. Manton had just re-entered the house, and, attracted by the loud cries of the child, he hastily entered the sick man's apartment. As the mountain's weight of suspense was thus suddenly removed from his heart, Martin Warren turned his face to the pillow, and it was wet with the father's tears.

The clergyman lifted up the sobbing child, examined the bruise on his chest, soothed him at length into silence, and placed him in the arms of his parent.

Warren was by this time sufficiently composed to give an account of the terrible circumstances which had forced him to strike his own child to the earth.

"Was it not an act of cruelty?" asked Manton.

"Of cruelty!" replied the astonished father.

"It was rather an act of love. It was to save my boy from destruction."

"You can understand this in the dealings of an earthly parent towards his child; may it not be the same in those of the All-wise Father; may He not sometimes in mercy lay low His wandering children to save them from a more terrible fate towards which they are blindly running?"

Mr. Manton said no more on the subject. He left the mind of the conscience-stricken father to trace the parallel and draw forth the lesson. He saw that an impression had been made, and silently lifted up his heart in prayer, that such impression might be deep and abiding.

When he next addressed Martin Warren it was in a different tone. "How came you," inquired the clergyman, "to be left alone with the child?"

"My wife has gone out," answered Warren.

"I am glad that she is taking a little fresh air," observed Mr. Manton, who had not forgotten the mission which he had undertaken. "Mrs. Warren looks much exhausted by confinement to the house and the fatigue and anxiety of

nursing. If any relative were here to relieve her it might be the means of preserving her health, and avoiding all risk of the recurrence of the fearful danger which has cost you so much anxiety to-day."

"I would not go over the last half-hour again for the wealth of the Indies!" exclaimed Warren.

"Have you any relative whom you could invite?"

"I! No, not one who would nurse a sick man, or share the poverty of a ruined one!"

"Mrs. Warren has a mother. Could not she be persuaded to come?"

Martin Warren bit his lip, it was a humiliating moment. At any other time his feelings would have exploded in anger. Was he to sue for her kindness in adversity on whom, in prosperity, he had closed his door! Was he to endure the presence of a woman in whose heart he had fixed a barbed arrow, and whose whole life, principles, and conduct had been in direct opposition to his own!

Mr. Manton did not at once press the point, but left the suggestion to work. He presently,

however, so quietly and truthfully represented the delicate state of Annie's health, the helpless condition of her child, the comfort of having one in the house who would think, act, and feel for the family, that he at length obtained Martin Warren's consent to write and invite Mrs. Laver to his home.

"From what I know and have heard of the widow's character," thought Edward Manton, as he gladly took up his writing materials, "I trust that she will come as the dove of peace to this miserable home. She may strengthen the weak principles of her daughter, confirm any new-born good resolutions of Warren, and by her activity, intelligence, and good sense, prove one of heaven's best blessings to them both."

The expectations of the missionary were not to be disappointed. The terrible lesson of that day had not been given to Martin Warren in vain.

CHAPTER XIX.

SAPPING AND MINING.

IN a room at Grandmont, which, though not a large one, is furnished with remarkable regard to comfort, beside a blazing fire, wrapped up in an embroidered dressing-gown, with his foot on a gouty-stool, sits, or rather reclines, Sir John Alison. His features are still heavier, his figure more round, and the purple tinge on his cheek yet deeper than when he was first introduced to the reader.

There is but one picture in the room, but it is one whose beauty instantly arrests the eye; it is a full-length likeness of Albina, the *chef-d'œuvre* of a celebrated artist. It represents the fair girl as Maurice saw her first, in the bloom of her youthful loveliness, with her robe of light tulle looped with rose-buds, and the Atma glittering on her snowy neck. Where is she of whose beauty that painting was once but the shadow? The rosebuds on the canvass

fade not, the blush on the cheek grows not pale. How few of the strangers who now admiringly look at the picture, give a thought to her whose dust sleeps almost forgotten, till the loud trumpet shall wake it to life! Even he who once vowed that he would barter life for her smile, now a happy husband and father, scarce wastes a passing sigh upon the memory of her who was to have been his bride. Oh, earthly love, precious as thou art—more precious than all else that is not of heaven—poor indeed should we be, if all our hopes and joys were bounded by thee!

Sir John is not sitting alone. A thin-featured man, of middle age, bronzed by exposure to a tropical sun, with reddish whiskers and moustaches, is seated at his side, and has been for more than an hour diverting the irritable invalid by stories of Indian adventure. Mr. Glidon is not only a good story-teller, but a good listener also, ready to laugh at the poorest joke, to find wit in the most common observation, and to discover that, on every imaginable subject, his own opinions are the very counterpart of those which the baronet expresses.

“Things are very different from what they were in my young days,” said Sir John, peevishly. Glidon pressed his lips together, and looked grave. “I remember the time when all the country about Grandmont was one thicket—not a house to be seen for miles. The road was so dangerous from highwaymen, that travellers usually made up a purse as a regular toll to the robbers. Those were jolly days for the huntsmen. My father kept the best pack of hounds in the county. I remember when I was a little chap, not higher than that screen, watching the horses leaping the stream, just below where the bridge now stands (there was no bridge then), and laughing to see my tutor, who had taken a fancy to try the sport, part company with his horse, and come floundering down into the water!” The old gentleman chuckled over the remembrance; Glidon laughed, and showed his white teeth, as if the misadventure of the tutor were the funniest thing in the world.

“But all those days are past. I don’t go much to London now, but I think that London is coming to me. There’s not a time that I

drive up to town but I see new houses rising, brick terraces and cockney villas. That building is the mania of the age."

"The curse of our time," exclaimed Glidon.

"And as if that were not enough," grumbled the baronet, "we have every now and then a vanful of cockneys coming to picnic close to my grounds, till I sometimes wish that I could put Grandmont Hall itself upon wheels, and roll it away beyond reach of the canaille."

Glidon's little acquiescing nod seemed to say that nothing could be more desirable.

"In short," continued Sir John, "everything is changing, and not for the better but the worse. There's nothing improves by time; unless it be," he added, more gaily, "the good port wine in my cellar."

"I never tasted such port in my life," cried Glidon, with the gusto of an accomplished *bon vivant*.

"Ah! you know what is good; you're a man of the world," cried Sir John. "There's no saying what that port has done for me." (Any one might have known, by one glance at the gouty foot, and the bloated features.) "And

yet Maurice has had an absurd fancy put into his head by some ass of a doctor, that I ought to put myself on an allowance, and not take more than two or three glasses a day."

"You should never stop short of a bottle," said Glidon, with an air of decision.

"You think so?"

"I don't think, I'm certain of it. I've seen a good deal of life, and I'm positive that nothing strengthens the constitution like a bottle of port. In some cases I should recommend two.

"You're a sensible man," said the baronet, cordially; "but Maurice" ——.

"Maurice I should consider an incipient teetotaller."

"Not quite so bad as that," said Sir John, who held the water-drinking race in abhorrence. "By the by, what has become of Maurice to-day?"

"He has gone to see his most valued friend."

"Who may that be?"

"Your vicar, Dr. Manton."

"He's no friend of mine," said the baronet, testily; "he's one of your sour Puritans, who

chooses to consider every harmless amusement as a sin. I never have liked the man." (Of this fact Mr. Glidon was perfectly aware.)

"He seems to have great influence," he remarked, "over your nephew."

"Fancy," continued the baronet, without appearing to notice the observation—"fancy the old doctor's wanting me to give up my great square pew, to cut it down into half a dozen little ones. The pew which my family have owned for centuries."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Glidon, elevating his red eyebrows with surprise.

"As if, too, a large pew were not absolutely necessary in a crowded church like ours, to keep one from being crushed and elbowed by the mob. Not that I ever get to church now myself, but the large square pew marks the ancient family. There's too much levelling in these days; one must make a decided stand against it."

"I am afraid that your nephew does not share your opinions. He intends some day to turn all the pews into free seats."

"He intends!" exclaimed Sir John, turn-

ing suddenly round with a look of mingled astonishment and indignation.

“ I may have mistaken our cousin’s words ; he may have said that they ought to be so turned some day.”

“ Let him catch his hare before he cooks it,” muttered the baronet, who was by no means free from the jealousy with which some men are apt to regard their heirs.

This jealousy, it was the object of Glidon, cautiously and insidiously, to foster. Ever since the baronet’s cousin had set foot within Grandmont Hall, he had been playing a deep and subtle game ; which, if he managed his cards adroitly, might result in altering the succession to the estate. The first thing which he attempted was, to gain the confidence and learn the weak points in the character of the young relative whom he deliberately designed to ruin. The confidence of Maurice Somers, Glidon could not succeed in obtaining. The natures of the two men were so essentially dissimilar, that an invisible but impassable barrier seemed ever to be raised between them. Maurice was not deceived by the insinuating address, nor won by

the flatteries of his cousin. But the young man was not so cased in prudence, so guarded in his intercourse with his rival, that he presented no point where the shaft of envy and malice might penetrate. Maurice was, as might be expected at the age of eighteen, a little jealous of his own independence, and sensitive as to the construction which might be put upon his motives. Glidon saw that the young man was bound to his uncle by the double tie of interest and gratitude. The latter was, to a generous spirit, the strongest; but the artful Glidon chose to ignore it altogether, and to make Maurice, as far as possible, appear in his own eyes as the time-serving parasite of a wealthy tyrant. There had never been congeniality of disposition, nor interchange of affection, between the uncle and the nephew. Maurice's dependence had ever been a yoke; it was the endeavour of Glidon to make him feel it a degrading burden, an intolerable chain. On the one hand, he artfully placed the character of Sir John before his nephew in the most unfavourable light; on the other, he stimulated the baronet to be more unreasonable, jealous,

and exacting, than he had ever appeared before. Glidon carefully brought forward, in conversation, every subject on which there was any probability of a collision between the sentiments of the clergyman's orphan, and those of his purse-proud benefactor.

Maurice possessed that same sensitiveness of feeling which makes some men hold back from any attempt to win the favour of an heiress, simply because she is an heiress. He was, perhaps, less attentive to his rich old relation than gratitude demanded, because he feared that his motives might be mistaken; and the smallest neglect on his part, was skilfully turned to his disadvantage.

Glidon had done much, during his visit, to supplant Maurice in the favour of his uncle; but he found that he had not yet done enough. The time of his own sojourn in England was drawing to a close, his leave had nearly run out; and though he had often contemplated throwing up the service altogether, in order to devote himself entirely to an object on which all his energies were now engaged, even Glidon's gambling spirit was hardly strong

enough to induce him to stake his prospects in life upon what might prove to be a desperate chance. Sir John still, perhaps, cared more for Maurice than his selfish heart had cared for any one else, since the death of his only daughter.

As Glidon's time grew shorter, his efforts became more assiduous. He studied the baronet's moods, humoured all his caprices, and bore, with exemplary patience, all his ebullitions of temper. Glidon's sycophancy disgusted Maurice, and made him shrink more and more from meeting his dangerous rival on the low ground of flattery and fawning. He could not enter on such a contest for the favour of a worldly and selfish old man. Sir John was offended by a reserve founded on feelings which his coarse nature could not understand; and when, a few minutes after the above conversation, Maurice entered the apartment, he was received with a coldness which made him aware that he had to thank Glidon for no friendly offices.

“Where have you been, Maurice Somers?”
The question was asked in a querulous tone.

“Only to Dr. Manton’s. His son, the missionary from Africa, has just returned, and”——

“He’d better have stayed there to preach to the niggers; nobody wants him here, we’ve enough of his canting family without him!”

The blood rose to Maurice’s brow, and all the more so because Glidon laughed, as if enjoying the wit conveyed in some delicate satire. There was more haughtiness than was becoming in the manner of the young man, as he replied to his uncle, “Dr. Manton was a valued friend of my father, and I hope that his son may be mine.”

“I suppose that I may have a voice in the matter, sir,” said the baronet, angrily; “I don’t choose to have all this intercourse between the vicarage and the Hall!”

Glidon was listening to the colloquy with the interest which a frequenter of the prize-ring might feel on the commencement of a contest between two athletes, on one of whom he had staked a heavy sum; when, much to his annoyance, the entrance of a servant occasioned a temporary diversion.

"Please, sir, Mrs. Laver asks if she might see you."

"Mrs. Laver—who's she? Oh! I remember," cried the baronet, "the old dame at the cottage near the bridge, whose pretty daughter ran off with a London clerk. Mind my word, that rascal will come to the gallows. Let her in, I will see the poor woman directly."

Maurice stood leaning on the back of the baronet's chair; Glidon turned his a little round, so as to command a front view of the door. Vexed as he was at the interruption, the subtle manœuvrer kept his attention awake, in order to avail himself of any opportunity that might arise of pursuing his game.

A small, very neatly-dressed woman, with delicate features, and silvery hair braided smoothly over her brow, under a black straw-bonnet and snowy cap, made her appearance at the door; and with formal, but not fawning respect, curtsied, first to Sir John, then to Maurice, and lastly, to the baronet's guest.

"Well, Mrs. Laver," said Sir John, in his hearty jovial tone, "what brings you here this cold day?"

Mrs. Lavers drew a letter from her pocket, which was almost as capacious as a carpet-bag, and handed it, silently, to Sir John.

"I can't be plagued with making out scrawls; Maurice, do you take it and read it aloud."

Maurice obeyed, and read the letter which Edward Manton had written on the previous day.

"So, that fellow who robbed you of your daughter, has got his deserts at last!" was the baronet's observation upon it. "Fever—loss of place—want of money—serves him right, serves him perfectly right."

"Perfectly right!" echoed Glidon.

"And he wants you to go as his sick-nurse, to wait upon him with no payment but an oath or a curse; as if he thought you of such spaniel nature as to fawn upon the hand that struck you!"

"Sir, I'm going," said Mrs. Laver, quietly.

"More fool you!" exclaimed Sir John.

"My poor child needs me," said the mother.

"And what made you come here to in-

form me that you are going to do an act of folly?"

"Sir, I'll tell you," replied the widow, speaking with an effort, though her manner remained calm as before. "Martin Warren can't work; won't be able to work for months; his house must be given up in a week, and there won't be shelter anywhere for him, or his poor wife and their blind little child."

"Except the poor-house," suggested Glidon, taking his cue from the baronet's face.

Mrs. Laver proceeded, without taking any notice of the interruption; "and I thought, sir, there's one home, though it be but a small one, where they might come and be welcome."

"You don't mean," cried Sir John, "to take the whole family in, to be eaten out of house and home."

"To share my crust with my own child," murmured the widow; "and I thought, sir—perhaps, sir," she continued, folding her thin hands, and instinctively looking to Maurice for encouragement, "as I've been your tenant for so many years, never failed in my rent, paid to the day, and served the family since I was a

girl, perhaps you would kindly help me with the expense of the move, and that of supporting so large an addition."

"Well, after the manner in which you have been treated, I cannot conceive what should induce you to give another thought to that Warren. I should look upon him as an enemy."

"There is One who bade us love our enemies," said the widow, "and sure He set us the example, for He gave His life for His."

Sir John greatly disliked reference to the Scriptures, though he professed the greatest respect for their authority, and regularly subscribed to the Bible Society. His tone was intended to "put down cant," as he replied to Mrs. Laver, "let's keep to the business before us. If you choose to receive back your daughter, well; I've no objection to that; nor to your taking in the blind child that you mentioned. I have no objection"—here the air of a patron was graciously assumed,—“I have no objection to assist you in meeting necessary expenses. But we must understand each other, Mrs. Laver; I will have nothing to do with the

man. If you bring into the parish that sceptical, dangerous, democratical dog"—the baronet's voice rose to an angry pitch,—“you shall not have a farthing from me. I'll throw the whole family overboard.”

“It must be clear to you, my good woman,” observed Glidon, “that it will be of the greatest advantage to your daughter to be separated from so unworthy a husband.”

“Sir,” replied the widow, respectfully, but firmly, “I will never be the one to separate husband from wife. I did all that I could to prevent the marriage, but my daughter having once vowed before God to take Martin Warren for better for worse, for richer for poorer, even till death should them part, the Lord forbid that her mother should tempt her to break that vow, or neglect her duty to her husband.”

“Right, right!” exclaimed Maurice, warmly.

“It must be a singular perversion of mind, my good woman,” said Glidon, “that prevents your seeing the wisdom of the course which Sir John so kindly recommends.”

Maurice fixed his flashing eyes upon the speaker.

“Sir John,” continued Glidon, “has at heart the welfare of his tenants; he would not let loose a wolf in his flock; he would guard the simple-minded people who look up to him as their best guide, from the corruption of infidel principles; Sir John would”——

“Really, sir, my uncle does not require your prompting,” exclaimed Maurice, whose pent-up dislike of both flattery and the flatterer found sudden vent in an unguarded moment.

The baronet’s anger flamed up at once. Turning in his chair as well as his gout would permit him, he rebuked his nephew sharply, in the tone and manner with which he might have silenced a forward schoolboy.

Maurice’s blood mounted to his forehead. He bit his nether lip, and his impulse was instantly to quit the room. If the young man did not follow that impulse, it was not worldly wisdom that restrained him. Perhaps the anxious pleading look of the widow was not without its effect.

“And now, Mrs. Laver,” said the baronet, turning again towards the meek supplicant, “you have my final answer. I will only assist

you if, as my friend here figures it, you shut the door of the fold against the wolf."

"Might it not rather be, sir, to shut the door against the wandering sheep, guided back by the rod of the merciful Shepherd, who willeth not that any should perish? My duty seems to me a very plain one, and my good pastor sees it just in the same light, for I have been over to the vicarage to-day. I must give help to those who want help, and leave the rest in the hands of my Lord."

The reference to Dr. Manton's opinion was unfortunate under existing circumstances. The baronet was little likely to be propitiated by knowing that, while only pecuniary assistance was asked from himself, the pastor was sought for counsel and advice. "I've done with you, I've done with you," exclaimed Sir John, with an impatient wave of the hand.

The widow silently and sadly again dropped her curtsey to each of the gentlemen, and then, with a stifled sigh, quitted the luxurious apartment. She was immediately followed by Maurice.

"What has that insolent boy gone out for?" said the irritable old man to Glidon.

"To win popularity with your tenants, dear sir, by showing how generous he can be with your money, to those who have come under your just displeasure."

Sir John uttered something resembling a growl, but made no more intelligible comment upon Glidon's kind and disinterested observation.

CHAPTER XX.

WARNING.

"MAY He who is the Father of the fatherless, and the Helper of the widow, reward you, and return this kindness a hundred-fold into your bosom!"

Such was the widow's blessing, as, on the flight of steps beneath the lofty portico, she parted from her young benefactor. The blessing lay warm at the heart of Maurice; he needed its soothing power, for pride, anger, and resentment were struggling with fierce energy there. The young man's spirit was full of bitterness, and he plunged into the thickest recesses of the wood, striding on at a rapid pace as if he hoped thus to leave painful thought at a distance.

"My situation is intolerable," he muttered to himself. "Have I no means of escaping from this bondage? There is here perpetual contact with sordid selfishness and sensuality.

The very atmosphere I breathe is tainted with worldliness. I am dependent on the favour of my uncle, and the only way to preserve that favour is by drinking deep, flattering falsely, chaining down every generous impulse, every noble aspiration, and becoming—like himself! Maurice checked himself, upbraided by the monitor within. “Ungrateful that I am—and is it with such feelings that I regard one from whose liberality I have experienced so many benefits. How painful is obligation where there is no attachment! What a heavy burden is a debt owed to one whom it is impossible to revere! He would exclude from me the only influence which has hitherto been as the breath of heaven, preserving from corruption and guilt. Does he think that his gold or his acres could repay me for the loss of one real friend—one friend who speaks to me as my father would have spoken, had God been pleased to spare him to his son?

“That strange dream which I had when a boy, seems realized in the life which I lead here. How often am I tempted, in the pursuit of the wildest pleasures, to indemnify myself

for the privations of my childhood, and the mortifications of my youth! Do I pass one evening under yon roof without every inducement being held out to me to drown my sense of right and wrong in the maddening draught, which it is deemed womanish weakness to abstain from? Is there no danger that I may in time give up the weary struggle—that constant temptation may at length wear away the impressions made in my first, happy, holy home, made by those who can speak to me no more of the heaven to which they showed me the way? As that time-serving Glidon is seeking to wrest from me my earthly inheritance, a far more dangerous and subtle foe would steal that immortal jewel which was shadowed forth in my dream. May they not both succeed?"

As Maurice, buried in his own thoughts, proceeded on with rapid stride, he took little note of his path. It now lay along the course of that stream so often mentioned in preceding chapters—that stream beneath whose waters the Atma had for years lain buried. A thin mantle of ice was over it now, and the long branches of the willows that bent over it were whitened

with a crust of frost. Maurice strode up the grassy bank to the pathway which led towards the public road, and vaulted over the turnstile by which Margaret Miles had once stood watching the baronet angling in the brook. Maurice was instinctively taking the nearest way to the vicarage, an instinct drawing him towards the friends who might throw light upon the chaos of his troubled thoughts, when he encountered Edward Manton. It was the second time that they had met on that day. The missionary's first glance at the young man's countenance convinced him that something of a painful nature had occurred during the brief space of time that had elapsed since Maurice had quitted the vicarage. The greeting between the gentlemen was cordial. Somers turned, and changed the direction of his course, and the two were soon walking together, at a slackened pace, in deep and earnest consultation.

There was a stamp of sincerity and truthfulness on Edward Manton that led even those who had had little previous intercourse with him, to regard him with instinctive confidence. Maurice found his words flow more rapidly

and freely in speaking to the younger Manton than in addressing the venerable pastor, his father. The same wisdom might enlighten both, the same high principle guide, but the vicar's son could sympathize better with the impetuous feelings of youth. Maurice laid his position, his trials, his temptations before his friend. He spoke to him of the resolutions which he had made by the grave of his parents, and in the moonlit chamber where he had dreamed that which had left so indelible an impression upon his mind. Manton, as he listened in silence, learned almost as much from the tone and manner of his companion as from his words, and he lifted up his heart in prayer for such guidance as might enable him to act an elder brother's part towards one who so much needed a friend.

"And how," exclaimed Maurice, in conclusion—"how am I to meet the difficulties which surround me; how reconcile my position with my principles, the claims of religion with the claims of my uncle?"

"May I speak freely to you, Somers?" said Edward Manton.

"Can you doubt it?" was the earnest reply.

"It seems to me that you have hardly yet learned the lesson conveyed in the dream which you have just related to me. You see vividly enough the aspect of the various temptations which beset you, you feel intensely the value of that soul which these temptations would imperil, but you do not sufficiently fix your eye on the life-boat and the Form within it. You rather call pride to your aid, you reject evil because you despise it, till in your scorn of what is worldly, selfish, or base, you confound the sin with the sinner."

"Do you mean in the case of Sir John?" demanded Maurice.

"Of Sir John's character I have no wish to speak; his nephew is perhaps the last man on earth who has a right to judge or condemn it."

Maurice was silent, but quickened his steps.

"In considering his comfort, in obeying his wishes, when they involve no disobedience to a higher law, you surely follow the path marked out to you by that Providence which was pleased to make him the channel of all the earthly advantages which you possess."

“Perhaps,” said Maurice, thoughtfully, “I have of late neglected my uncle. An unloved and unloving benefactor has appeared somewhat in the light of a tyrant, and the debt of obligation in that of a yoke. Besides,” he added, drawing up his form to its full height, and walking with a prouder step—“besides, as my prospects in the world are entirely in his hands, I should have been degraded in my own eyes, by acting the part of a cringing dependent, a fawning sycophant.”

“Forgive the question,” said Manton, “but is that sensitiveness which you feel only the sensitiveness that shrinks from contact with evil; has it nothing of the nature of earthly pride?”

“You would not have me self-interested and worldly,” said Maurice, in a tone of impatience, “a slave to the lust of gold?”

“As little as I would have you proud and self-reliant, the slave of a will unsubdued. You must my friend, seek your strength not in your own resolutions, and your safety not in your own loftiness of soul. As in your dream, it was the cry for help from above which divided the flames before you, and showed you a way

of escape, so it must now be by faith and prayer that in the midst of multiplying temptations you can walk secure, as the saints of old in the fiery furnace. Regard not your duty towards God and your duty towards man as separate, and scarcely compatible one with the other; the *love of Christ* that constraineth, this must be the soul's vital principle to preserve it alike from worldliness and pride, from visible temptations from without, or more subtle and dangerous temptations from within."

Several minutes of silence intervened. It was broken by Maurice briefly, but cordially, thanking his friend for his candour.

"I know not," he then said, "if you will approve of a design which has for years been forming in my mind, but which has only lately taken a definite shape; a plan which, if followed out, might remove me to scenes more congenial, and give me an opportunity of winning a competence in a way less opposed to my inclination. I am anxious to enter some honourable profession."

"Have you spoken on the subject with your uncle?"

“Not yet; at least, not in a decided manner.”

“Would he be likely to oppose your wishes?”

Maurice hesitated a little in his reply. “I scarcely know,” was his answer; “I think it possible that Sir John might dislike any change that would involve my long absence from Grandmont. He has initiated me into his ways; I know his tenants, I look over his accounts, I believe that I am useful to him in various trifling matters; at least, I was so, till Mr. Glidon’s arrival. He has relieved me from some of my cares.”

“And would willingly relieve you entirely from all?”

The young man smiled an assent.

“If I might give advice,” said Edward Manton, “I would counsel you not to enter upon the subject of your future destination until Mr. Glidon has quitted this place.”

“That will happily be next week; and within the month he will be in the Bay of Biscay, on his return to the East.”

“While he remains, be circumspect and guarded; less for your own sake than for that

of others. Give no handle to misrepresentation, control the expression of your irritated feelings, be "——

"Worldly-wise," interrupted Maurice, with something approaching to a sneer.

"Not so," said Manton, earnestly; "if at any time duty be on one side, and interest on the other, however small the duty, however great the interest may appear, unhesitatingly, unflinchingly sacrifice to principle any—every mere temporal advantage. But be certain, first, that your own heart be not deceived; that pride and resentment have not assumed the guise of virtues; that if you suffer, it be indeed for conscience sake, and not because you have given the rein to passions as much opposed to the spirit of your religion as those which you scorn and condemn."

CHAPTER XXI.

A PROPOSAL.

As soon as Warren could bear the fatigue of the journey, and indeed, from the pressure of circumstances, almost before it was safe for him to undertake one, the invalid was removed to his mother-in-law's cottage in Surrey. Swathed in flannels, pale, and almost helpless as a corpse, the once gay and proud young man was lifted by kindly arms into that dwelling from which he had three years before lured its thoughtless inmate, leaving behind a widowed mother in loneliness and grief. Annie entered the porch with drooping head, and eyes dimmed by tears. Bitterly had she experienced the truth of the inspired words, "*The way of transgressors is hard.*" She carried her blind boy to the little casement, at which she had sat at work so often in happier days, listening for a well-known step, and starting with a joy not unmixed with fear, when a shadow from without suddenly darkened

the daylight, and Martin Warren whispered his greeting through the clustering roses. The place was full of reminiscences to the disobedient daughter, and every recollection was fraught with pain.

As Annie stood mournfully at the casement, the goldfinch, whose cage was still hung there, began suddenly to pour forth a joyous song. It was like a welcome to the wanderer returned! Annie put her finger through the bars, and her old favourite fearlessly hopped upon it. "He knows me still!" she faltered forth, and her heart and eyes overflowed, while blind Neddy, delighted with the bird's carol, laughed and clapped his little hands, with a child's fresh and innocent joy.

"Through how many avenues," thought Edward Manton, who had been aiding in carrying Warren into the cottage—"through how many avenues can the Almighty pour joy into the hearts of his creatures. The sightless child, in the midst of poverty, finds his little world of happiness in a bird's warble, and a mother's kiss!"

Suddenly, Annie roused herself. This was

not the time to indulge in sad regrets. She had seen her husband placed in the inner apartment, where faultless neatness made up for simple furniture and contracted accommodation ; now another care engaged her attention. " My mother, but where will you sleep ? "

" I have a nice mattress, my child, which I roll up by day, and which will make me an excellent bed in the kitchen. "

" You, mother—you sleep on the brick floor, and in winter ! " exclaimed Annie Warren, with a look of distress.

" Do not talk of winter, " said the widow, cheerfully ; " it is all summer in my cottage, now that my child has come back ! "

Warren spoke little, but reflected much ; he had leisure for thought during the long period of his convalescence. The words of Mr. Manton had not been without their effect on the mind of the prejudiced man ; the preservation of his child had deepened the impression ; but the strongest influence for good was exercised over him by what he witnessed of Christianity in the daily course of a poor illiterate widow, who acted upon the simple principle,

"Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you." Even the sceptic could not doubt the evidence of a living epistle, bearing the characters of ready forgiveness and disinterested love; he could not doubt the vitality of a tree which he saw bearing fruits so divine. The change in Warren was gradual and slow. His wife and her mother had much to endure from the fretfulness and gloomy despondency of the invalid, whom they so tenderly nursed. Warren never appeared the bright happy Christian, whose presence brings sunshine to a home; but he became a sincere, though imperfect, believer—no counterfeit jewel, though one with many a flaw, and with improving bodily health his spiritual strength also increased. He was able in the spring to enter upon a small situation procured for him by Dr. Manton, and thus to relieve his generous mother-in-law from the heavy burden of his support. Warren, and each member of his family, had reason to bless God for the illness which had arrested him in a course of evil—the blow which had been struck to save him from the destruction into which his blindness of heart was hurrying him.

Let us now quit the cottage, and return to the Hall. The day on which Warren arrived at the former was the same as that which Mr. Glidon had fixed upon for his departure from the latter. As the period of his stay grew shorter, this gentleman redoubled his attentions to Sir John, and his secret efforts to produce coldness between the baronet and his natural heir. Every topic that could irritate Maurice was brought forward, every difference of opinion dragged forth into day. Glidon felt that he was partially successful; Sir John became peevish and suspicious, spoke to his nephew with harshness, and sorely tried the temper and patience of the youth; but still Glidon could not flatter himself that anything had occurred seriously to injure the prospects of Maurice. The baronet, with the indolent good-nature which underlaid all his other qualities, was little disposed to take the serious step of changing the succession to his estate. Glidon could not even buoy himself up with the expectation of a substantial legacy from his cousin. Like many rich men, the baronet had no idea of apportioning his wealth; he would as little

have thought of dividing his precious Atma had he still possessed it. Glidon's mind was troubled by the fear that all his craft and tact had been utterly thrown away ; that Maurice's fortune, though apparently never secure, and shaken by every breath, might yet prove like the famous stone, which is so wondrously poised that, though moved by a slight effort, it remains year after year in position unchanged. It may rock in the storm, but it falls not.

Maurice Somers, as may be believed, felt little regret at the approaching departure of his uncle's guest. He was not sorry that an engagement at some distance from Grandmont, obliged him to pass the preceding night away from his home. He was in no haste to return early on the following morning, and formed his arrangements so as to prevent all probability of meeting again with Mr. Glidon.

It was with a sense of relief that young Somers reflected, as he rode up to the Hall, that the baronet's evil genius had now left it, as he trusted, for ever. He was not to hear again that grating laugh which followed a coarse joke like its echo, or the short cough which was

ever the prelude to some offensive remark. Maurice seemed to breathe more freely in the absence of Glidon; and his greeting to his uncle, when he found him at length alone, was more cheerful and cordial than it had been for several weeks past.

Maurice soon entered upon the subject which had lately been uppermost in his mind. He did not approach it, as Glidon might have done, cautiously, and feeling his way at every step; but went straight to the point at once.

“Humph!” muttered the baronet, slowly rubbing his broad forehead; “and what profession do you desire to adopt?”

Maurice had for some time indulged a wish to enter the army, which he had given up on account of the heavy expenses in which its fulfilment would involve his uncle. His mind had lately been directed to a different career. “I thought,” he replied, “should you approve, of entering myself for the competitive examination for the civil service of India.”

“India! wheugh!” whistled Sir John, “that won’t do; I can’t have you both at the other side of the globe, shaking the old pagoda tree, and

leaving me here to manage as best I may! No, no, no, I've a better plan than that;" and with something of his old good humour, the baronet laid his hand on the shoulder of his nephew. "I've often thought that you would want something to do, something besides shooting rooks and playing at billiards; and I've determined to send you to college, Maurice, with a view to your entering the Church."

"The Church!" repeated young Somers, thoughtfully and slowly; "I do not feel myself fit for that."

"Oh! that modesty is all humbug and nonsense; you are more fit for it, I warrant, than hundreds of those who are in it. And, you see, it's just the thing to suit you. There's the living here in my gift—five hundred a-year—pretty vicarage—parish not too large—church close to my grounds. The doctor, who had the living from my father, is near seventy now; can't live for ever, must presently put off harness and go to grass. By the time you're ready for the place, the place will be ready for you."

"But"——began Maurice.

"But me no buts!" cried the baronet, im-

patiently, "nothing can be better than the whole arrangement. The parson at Grandmont should always be one of the family, or there's endless plague between him and the lord of the manor, as I experience now. Why, I can't so much as wish to cut down an old yew, or quiet the ding-donging of the bell at all unreasonable hours, but I must be at loggerheads with the parson, and get the worst in the battle besides! Now, if you were vicar"—

"You might find me, perhaps, as troublesome, sir, as Dr. Manton," said Maurice, with a smile.

"I'd find a way of stopping that," observed Sir John, in a tone that made Somers flush to his temples. "But there's no use in talking more about the matter; I've made up my mind to carry out my plan; everything will be for my comfort, and it's impossible that you can have any reasonable objection."

"I have a very strong one," said Maurice, gravely.

"Name it," cried his impatient auditor.

"I look upon the ministry as the highest and noblest profession which any man can

adopt, but as one which it would be sin to enter from any worldly motive whatever."

"Why, your own father was a clergyman," exclaimed Sir John.

"My father deliberately made choice of that profession, because he felt himself called to it by God. He could answer, with an untroubled conscience, the solemn question regarding the motive that influenced him, asked in the ordination service."

"You are a weak, scrupulous fool!" exclaimed Sir John, in a loud angry voice—"a child that is startled by shadows! There's many an honest man in a surplice whom nature intended for a soldier or a gamekeeper! Such men have none of these nonsensical scruples, or they've the sense to keep them to themselves. Don't say anything more about it," he continued, as Maurice seemed on the point of replying, "I've that little business which I mentioned before for you to do for me to-day in London. You can turn over the matter in your mind as you go, and I'll talk it over here with Glidon."

"Glidon!" exclaimed Maurice Somers,

"I thought that he had set off this morning."

"Oh! he found that he could give me one more day. I'll take his opinion on the subject. He's a sensible man, is Glidon; I don't know a more clear-headed fellow. Pity he's too old to be made a parson of. I believe that my estate would bring in half as much again, if I could keep him to help me to manage it."

Maurice bit his lip, and as he turned to leave the room, heard a well-known whistle in the corridor. The next minute Glidon sauntered into the apartment. Maurice exchanged with him a hasty greeting, not more cordial than civility required, and calling for a fresh horse, was soon in his saddle, on his way to the great metropolis. He took little note of his road; his steed chose its own path and its own pace. Maurice's mind was absorbed in solving the question whether the time had not now come when, duty being on the one side, and interest on the other, he must make a deliberate choice between them. Little was wanting, young Somers perceived, to change entirely his prospects in life, to reduce him from the position of

a wealthy man's heir, courted, honoured, welcomed wherever he appeared, to that of a penniless orphan, with nothing to look to but his own exertions for winning his way in the world. Maurice was not insensible to the advantages of fortune. He was not insensible to the pleasure of checkmating a subtle, designing opponent, and of disappointing the schemes of an ambitious, covetous man, such as he knew Glidon to be. After all, Somers asked himself, was there not needless scrupulosity in the objection which conscience had raised? He had no repugnance to the office of a clergyman; in undertaking it he would offer small violence to his own inclinations, and would open to himself a wider field of usefulness than he could enter upon by any other means. Maurice argued the question with himself, over and over again, but his mind ever returned to the same starting point. Would it not be simply and solely from worldly motives that he would be obtruding himself into the ministry? Would he not be taking upon himself the most solemn vows, not in order to serve God, but to please man? Would he not be uttering a fearful falsehood

before heaven, when declaring, as at ordination he must declare, that he believed himself moved by the Spirit? Would he not be taking self-interest and personal resentment as his guides in what might be the most momentous decision of his life?

Another line of action presented itself to the young man's mind. Seeming acquiescence with the wishes of his uncle, in the hope that during the years which must intervene before the ministry could be entered, his own feelings in regard to it might change. But Maurice felt a firm persuasion that the Church was not the sphere for which he was ever likely to be fitted, and his conscience revolted from the idea of using any deception towards his liberal benefactor. No; the more Somers reflected on the subject, the more he became convinced that a simple, straightforward course was the only one which was worthy of his Christian profession. He would do that which he felt to be right, and leave the result in a higher hand.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE STRUGGLE.

LOUD and uproarious was the mirth at the dinner-table at Grandmont. The baronet seemed for a while to forget gout and every other annoyance, and Glidon excelled himself in his efforts to divert and amuse his host. Maurice marked, with silent annoyance, how often the bottle was pushed towards his uncle, and how Glidon, "reviving the good old custom of former days," made the baronet pledge him again and again. It was a loathsome sight to view an elderly man giving the free rein to self-indulgence, and a companion, under the name of friendship, doing the tempter's work, urging on one only too willing in the course, to deaden his reason, excite his temper, and yet farther injure his already impaired constitution.

"Well, Maurice, my boy," exclaimed the jovial baronet, as he filled high a bumper of claret, "have you made up your mind to a

black coat? Shall we drink to the future bishop?"

"We'll talk the matter over to-morrow, if you please, sir," was Maurice's guarded reply.

"No time like the present," cried the baronet.

"No time like the present," echoed Glidon, who had his own reasons for saying so.

"I must ask another day before I give a final answer upon a question like this. It is not one for an after-dinner discussion."

"Discussion!" exclaimed Sir John. "It requires no discussion—merely a simple yes or no—and that, I take it, can be said just as well after dinner as before it."

Maurice quietly pushed back his chair, with intent to rise from the table. He saw that his uncle was unable at that moment to form a clear judgment on anything.

"Mr. Somers is going to give us the slip," observed Glidon, with a sneer. "I'll be bound he's engaged to an evening prayer-meeting."

"Give us the slip!" repeated the baronet, striking the table with his fist till all the glasses jingled upon it; "but he shall not give us the

slip, we'll drive the fox to the earth; there shall be no doubting upon this question. **Keep your seat, sir, and answer me, ay or no. Will you take holy orders to please me?"**

"No, sir," replied Maurice, gravely. The answer was calmly and respectfully given, but it was received with blank amazement on the part of the baronet, who, being utterly unable to comprehend the line of conduct adopted by the young man, had anticipated no decided opposition to the plan on which he had now set his heart. Glidon leant over the table, and a serpent-like glitter was in his cold, gray eye, as he hissed forth, rather than spoke, the words, "Mr. Somers takes pains to show us so clearly that he counts for less than nothing the opinion, the wishes of his most generous benefactor, that it is evident that he feels himself as independent as if already in possession of his uncle's estate."

"But he is not in possession—no, not of an inch of it—the proud, ungrateful boy!" exclaimed Sir John, the flood-gates of passion bursting at once, and a fierce torrent of invective rushing forth. "Does he not owe to me

the very bread that he eats—has he not been to me as a son—have I not nourished him, cared for him, made a man of him, and does it come to this at last? Go, sir,” continued the baronet, his voice trembling with passion, while the veins in his forehead swelled high—“I have no wish to detain you in this room, or in this house, sir. Go to your canting, psalm-singing friends, and see what they will do for you when I’ve cut you off with a shilling!”

Maurice rose from his seat, pale but calm. It was not for him to answer the wild words of the half-intoxicated man; to attempt to oppose argument or expostulation to the fury of his irritated uncle. Somers walked with a firm step to the door, deliberately unclosed it, and went forth, and as he did so, heard behind him the harsh laugh of the exulting, triumphant Glidon.

“And is all indeed over?” thought Maurice, as he found himself in the cold clear moonlight, on a frosty winter’s night, with the chill bleak wind beating on his feverish cheek. “Am I indeed disinherited, driven from my home by the arts of an unscrupulous rival, who, to gain

his own ends, works upon the passions of that unhappy old man!" He turned round and looked up at the lordly dwelling which rose behind him. Every pillar of the portico, every sculptured ornament of the frieze, looked silvery white in the moonshine, thrown out into bolder relief by the deep black shadows which they cast. Never had Grandmont Hall appeared more beautiful to him who, but an hour before, had regarded himself as heir to it and the broad lands which surrounded it!

And yet Maurice marvelled to himself that his emotions were not deeper or more painful; that he could so calmly contemplate the probable loss of fortune and estate, and arm himself with resolution for the coming battle of life. Was it that his spirit was stunned by the suddenness of the blow which it had received? or was it that trials have comparatively small power to distress when they touch not the immortal jewel—when they darken not the light of the soul?

Maurice lingered not long in the precincts of what he had once called his home. He determined to go at once to the vicarage, pass

the night there with his friends, seek their counsel, and decide in the morning upon what course it would be best to pursue. He crossed the park by the path which is now familiar to the reader, under the shadowy trees, to the spot where the willow dropped over the frozen brook.

A few rapid paces brought Maurice to the turnstile and the public road. All was very drear and silent around at that lonely hour. The wind howled wildly amongst the leafless trees, and drove the clouds rapidly ever and anon across the disc of the full-orbed moon. There was but one steady light in view, and that was from the little low-porched cottage in which the widow Laver resided. The way to the vicarage lay past that cottage, and to Maurice the one feeble light showed like a beacon of hope amidst the darkness and desolation of the scene. He slackened his steps as he stood opposite the dwelling. There was a voice sounding within which Maurice recognized as the widow's; he could not distinguish the accents, but, from the tone he knew that it was uttering an evening prayer. Maurice remained still for a

moment, and his heart joined in the act of devotion. There was refreshment in the thought that, however earthly ties may be broken, that which binds all God's children together is immortal as the souls which it unites.

Then Maurice pursued his way along the dark and deserted road. There was a short cut across a copse to the vicarage, and as every foot of the path was so familiar to the young man that he could almost have trodden it blindfold, he determined thus to shorten the distance.

Maurice had now left the cottage some way behind him; when he turned back to look again at its cheering light, the widow's candle was no longer gleaming; the inmates of the lonely dwelling had, doubtless, retired to rest. The moon shone out again in full splendour, as Maurice entered the low copse, where he had often to push aside, or trample down, the straggling sprays which encumbered and half hid the path.

Suddenly, to his surprise, Somers saw before him, in that desolate spot, the tall figure of a man, wrapt in a cloak, with a fur-cap slouched

over his brow, and a heavy bludgeon in his hand. What could have brought him there at such an hour, and what could he be doing in such a place? Maurice marked him stoop low in the brushwood, as if he would fain have concealed his gaunt frame from view in the depths of the thicket. Somers had caught a glimpse of his face in the moonlight, and never had he beheld one on which the character of ruffian was more unmistakably impressed.

“That fellow is here on no errand of good,” thought Maurice to himself, while he kept his eye on the dark crouching figure; “but as there is but one man, I see no necessity for changing my direction. It might be as well, however, to have a good stick in my hand, in case this ill-favoured fellow-traveller should take a fancy to my watch or purse.”

It was, in sooth, just such a place as fancy might draw as the scene of a midnight murder. Not a human habitation was in sight, but that distant cottage, whose dim outline could barely be traced against the dark blue sky. A wide waste of common spread around, interspersed with clumps of thicket, and bounded on one side

by the black mass of trees which marked the position of the Grandmont estate. On all the tract of the open country, gleaming frosty white in the pale cold light, not a single being met the gaze of Maurice, except the dark suspicious-looking form just in front, standing, or rather stooping, in the path of the young man.

Maurice laid his grasp on a sapling close beside him, which afforded the readiest weapon to his hand. He tried to snap it off, but the young wood was tough, and resisted his efforts. He shook it hard, the roots gave way, and he wrenched the sapling out of the ground; upturning, as he did so, some of the sod which had lain around it.

Imbedded in that sod lay a small object which instantly arrested the attention of Somers, as the moon's rays fell glistening upon it. He had seen that object but once before, and many years had since elapsed, yet he recognized it in an instant, as the Atma which had sparkled on the dress of Albina! Almost doubting the evidence of his senses, Maurice stooped to pick up the inestimable treasure thus by strange accident revealed.

But a wolf-like eye was upon him. Jem Jodril was watching the approaching figure, though not at first with intention to injure. The gambler marked Maurice's little start of surprise, his quick movement forward to raise something from the ground, and then his pause as if to examine what he held in his hand, and the conviction flashed across the mind of Jodril that the stranger had found, without search, that which he himself had hunted for by night and by day. In the possession of the coveted Atma, all the ruffian's hopes of fortune were centred; he could not look on and see the prize carried off before his eyes. With a sudden rush, like that of some wild animal, Jodril sprang upon Maurice Somers.

There is a fierce, desperate struggle, in that wild and lonely thicket. There is the sound of blows rapidly exchanged, and then the short, hard breathing of men engaged in a wrestle for life, and the cry of "Murder!" which the gale bears far away from any human ear. The struggle is now too close for the use of bludgeons, but Jodril carries a more deadly weapon; and, as he grapples with his youthful opponent,

the blue steel of a large clasp-knife glimmers in the ruffian's hand !

Heaven help thee now, Maurice Somers, for no earthly aid is near ; give strength to thy arm, shield thy young life, for the struggle is one of desperation ; and, stained with thy blood, the Atma lies on the trampled ground !

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE RETURN.

SIR JOHN ALISON rose on the following morning in heavy and irritable mood. Sleep had for long forsaken his pillow, and only came at last to frighten him with dreams of horror. He woke with that weight on his spirit, which not unfrequently precedes the returning consciousness of its cause. Sir John soon remembered that he had quarrelled with his nephew, that he had driven from his home the only child of the sister whose image had been haunting him during the night. The baronet did not suffer remorse, his deadened conscience could hardly have been roused to such a feeling ; but he was uneasy, discontented with himself, everything, everybody, who approached him.

The situation of Glidon during the breakfast, was one in which his worst enemy might have pitied him. His schemes had so far been successful ; but the last step, the most

important step, had yet to be taken, and insuperable difficulties appeared to attend it. If that unwieldy apoplectic-looking man, whose swollen fingers could scarcely guide a pen, should die without making a will, or altering one already made, his estate must inevitably descend to his nephew. The carriage which was to convey Glidon to London was ordered to be at the door by Ten; was it to take him to the baronet's lawyer to make necessary arrangements for disinheriting Somers, or was it—terrible alternative!—to hurry the disappointed schemer for ever from the scene of his schemes? Glidon had delayed his departure to the last possible day; if he waited for another his passage-money must be forfeited, and probably his Indian appointment lost! Glidon was like one who, having by indefatigable efforts almost attained to the summit of a mountain, suddenly finds a chasm of unknown depth stretching across his path. He dare not venture on the leap, and yet without it, all his past labour is lost, and he must descend, disappointed and humbled, to the shades of the valley below.

Glidon was naturally impatient to enter upon business; Sir John started back from it like a restive horse. Glidon would fain have irritated the baronet's mind yet more strongly against his nephew; Sir John's feelings were undergoing a revulsion, and his irritation was diverted upon his nephew's rival. Glidon had never more anxiously wished to please, and had never found it more difficult to please; he had to conceal his restlessness, control his impatience, converse on indifferent subjects, while his whole soul was wound up to a pitch of anxiety almost amounting to torture, as minute after minute rolled on, and in spite of all his efforts he found himself as far from his point as ever!

Glidon glanced uneasily at his watch. *Quarter to ten!* "Now or never!" thought the schemer. Prefacing the remark with a little cough he commenced, "Partings are always unpleasant!"

The only reply was a philosophic "humph!" as the baronet helped himself to a buttered muffin.

"When," continued Glidon, "the tie of

relationship is strengthened by that of cordial friendship; when one feels the respect—the esteem”——

“May I trouble you for a slice of ham?” said Sir John, unceremoniously cutting short a studied peroration.

Glidon obeyed with apparent alacrity, though with feelings curiously in contrast to his professions of respect and esteem; it was well, perhaps, for the old baronet that he had not the power to read them.

Ten minutes to ten! “I confess, dear sir,” said Glidon, with a look of concern, “that I do not feel easy in leaving you at present. The state of your valuable health”——

“Health, sir! very good health—nothing the matter with my health—never was better in my life!” growled the baronet, who could seldom bear allusion to his declining years. The observation had evidently been an unfortunate one, and the speaker for some seconds was silenced.

“I wish that it were in my power to pitch my tent in old England,” presently recommenced the almost desperate Glidon; “I sometimes venture to think it possible that I might

be of some service to my friends; but a poor dog like me, tied down to the drudgery of a profession, has scarcely a choice in the matter. If, indeed, I could get anything certain in this country"——

"There's nothing certain," observed the baronet, following the train of his own thoughts rather than that of the ideas suggested by Glidon. "I was certain yesterday that Maurice would have become a parson to please me."

"It is fortunate," said his companion, "that circumstances have made you at last acquainted with the character of that young man."

"Acquainted with it!" exclaimed the testy baronet, "why I know it as well as my own!"

"Your patience, sir, has been long-enduring"——

"There was no need of patience," interrupted Sir John, in the true spirit of contradiction. "Maurice was brought up like a Methodist, and has some crotchets of his own, but he's a fine fellow in the main—did well at school, excellently well—he's a lad any one might be proud of."

"And yet, such wilful disobedience"——

“Why, my father wished Gilbert to take orders—poor Gilbert, who was lost in the ‘Speedwell’—that he might hold this very same living. I remember all about it now, as if it had happened yesterday. Gilbert was much such a youth as Maurice—fine handsome fellow was Gilbert. My father was sitting in this very room, when Gilbert, looking pale”——

The baronet started almost from his seat, as though his words had actually raised before him the apparition of the brother who had long been dead! The door had been unclosed before he could finish his sentence, and Maurice stood before him, but so much changed in appearance that it needed no touch of superstition to account for the baronet’s start. The brow of the young man was encircled by a bandage of linen—his face, even his lips, were bloodless as those of a corpse—his left hand was supported by a sling—and yet there was a brightness and satisfaction in his eye, which announced the bearer of good tidings.

“Maurice, my boy, what has happened?” exclaimed Sir John, in alarm.

“That which has induced me to appear

here, as I should not otherwise have done, without a communication from yourself; but I could not let any hand but my own restore this to its rightful owner," and, with something of exultation in his look, the young man placed before his uncle the long-lost jewel—the beautiful Atma!

Sir John almost trembled at the sight. The recollections connected with the gem—recollections of a dead brother, and a daughter in her grave, and the extraordinary and sudden manner in which he had again received that which he had believed to be lost to him for ever, might have overcome a man of quicker feeling and a more impressionable nature. As it was, the voice of the baronet betrayed more emotion than Maurice had believed him capable of showing, as, grasping his nephew's hand in both his own, he exclaimed, "My dear boy, you have done me a service which I can never forget."

"Mr. Glidon's carriage is"—commenced the butler as he entered the room; but the man stopped abruptly in the midst of the announcement, fixing his eyes, with a scared and

wondering expression on the ghastly countenance of Maurice Somers.

He had, however, said enough to convey his meaning, and Glidon had seen enough to make him aware that Grandmont Hall was no longer a place for him. Pallid with excitement, half choked with disappointment and suppressed rage, Glidon bade a hasty farewell to the baronet, whose mind was so much pre-occupied with his nephew and his jewel, that he was well pleased to have the courtesies usual on such occasions, cut as short as possible. Glidon rushed into the carriage, without bestowing a glance on the expectant servants who officiously crowded around, buried himself in a corner, with his hat drawn over his eyes, and never raised them until he had left far behind him a place which he had once hoped to have called his own, but which he could now only wish to forget.

Meanwhile, Maurice, in few words, often interrupted by eager questions, had related to his uncle the strange events of the night. After a desperate struggle with his assailant, which had lasted for several minutes, the young man had

succeeded in wrenching the knife from Jodril, but not before he himself had received several severe gashes. Finding himself disarmed of his dangerous weapon, the ruffian had fled, and Maurice, faint from loss of blood, but holding the jewel in his bleeding hand, had made his way to the vicarage, where he had received every kindly attention from Edward Manton and his family. How the Atma had lain buried at the foot of the sapling, in the spot where it had been so strangely discovered, remained a mystery to the wondering baronet, till the police, who had been set on the highwayman's track, had lodged Jem Jodril in a jail. This man affirmed on his trial that he had accidentally found the jewel in a heap of rubbish, that he was carrying it back to its owner, when, in a quarrel with a companion on the way, he had flung it into the thicket, where it had remained until discovered by Maurice.

The baronet listened with deep interest to the story told by his nephew. "What a strange fate," he exclaimed, "has attended this precious jewel! Won in fight, carried in safety through

perils of flood and fire, strangely lost, more strangely recovered—buried, and yet raised from the dust—struggled for, bled for, even died for, there it is, bright and uninjured still, as beautiful, as perfect, as precious as it was when first it shone in a prince's crown! Maurice, my boy, the gem is yours; you have fairly won it, and will, doubtless, know how to keep it. My course is nearly run—what are gems to a childless old man! Take it as an earnest of the inheritance which must one day be yours, and remember that whatever riches you may enjoy upon earth, that one jewel outweighs them all.”

And here we take leave of the characters of our tale. Yet one word, dear reader, before the leaves are closed, and the volume laid aside which may have beguiled some hour of leisure. I know not if you be young or old, rich or poor—if you be nursed in the lap of luxury, or earn your bread by the sweat of your brow—if your face wear the bloom of youth, or be furrowed by the wrinkles of age. I know not if your heart beat high with hope, or if my fiction have been perused only to lull the sense of pain or sorrow, but one thing I know, you are at this

moment the possessor of an Atma, a soul, a jewel beyond all price, which it is the unceasing design of the powers of evil to win from you by subtlety and deceit ! Who can tell the vicissitudes through which that precious Atma may already have passed. Review the history of your soul. Has it not been surrounded by the flames of temptation—hazarded in the pursuit of pleasure—buried beneath the rippling waters of frivolity, or deep sunk in the mire of selfish indulgence ? Have you not possessed it without knowing its value ? Have you not encompassed it with the tinsel of vanity, till the world could no longer recognize it as a thing immortal, and destined for heaven ? Have you thought on all that it cost ? Have you remembered that—

“ For it a price was given,
Nor man nor angel could have paid,
Nor all the host of heaven ? ”

Have you considered its origin, and its glorious destiny in the world to come ?

Oh ! answer not these questions lightly, for their subject is most weighty and solemn. The time is approaching, and may now be near,

when, amidst the ashes of an earth destroyed, the gems of God, and those gems alone, differing indeed in beauty, brightness and splendour, yet each precious and fair in His sight, shall shine in the glory of an eternal day, the chosen treasures of the heavenly King !

“The Lord will gather up his jewels, won
From earth, and yet not earthy ; sharpest griefs
And trials here will but have given to each
A polished brightness ; that, celestial light
Reflecting from a thousand points, the gems
May sparkle with a radiance worthy heaven !

* * * *

The Lord will gather up his jewels ! Oh !
May we be numbered with those gems of light !
Blest Saviour ! Thou hast bought us with Thy blood,
Shed on us now Thy glory, make us Thine ;
Change our vile natures by Thy Spirit's power,
And “make us to be number'd with Thy saints
In glory everlasting ! Yea, amen !”

GLIMPSES OF THE UNSEEN.

THE CAMPAIGN OF LIFE.

A TALE OF THE CRIMEA.



CHAPTER I.—THE LANDING.

It was on that memorable morn, when the troops of the allied armies of England and France first landed in the Crimea, where so many gallant ones were destined to win martial glory and a grave, that two young soldiers, who had been among the first to press the soil of the enemy, remained a little apart, watching the arrival of each boat as it drew near, heavy with its living freight. There was little to distinguish these young men from the hundreds around them thronging that beach, whose laughs and shouts blended with the multifarious sounds from ocean and from shore—the splash of paddle, the hiss of escaping steam, the stroke of oar, and the call of the bugle, which woke

the echoes of that so lately silent strand. Yet there was that in the bearing of both the Englishmen, and especially that of the elder, which marked them as belonging to a class above that from which our brave regiments are usually supplied. George Everton, with his thoughtful eye and sunburnt but intellectual brow, as he stood with folded arms leaning against a rock, looked like one whom nature had intended for command, though he wore not the officer's sword by his side, nor the golden epaulette on his shoulder.

"Hark to their merry shouts, Vernon," said he, turning to the sickly, melancholy youth reclining on the sand beside him, whose wasted cheek and sunken eye, with the frequent cough which shook his feeble frame, gave painful forebodings that death would soon claim his victim, even if spared the hardships and perils of war. "Our lads come to the struggle as they would to a banquet, joyous and thoughtless of the morrow, as school-boys when they begin the campaign of life."

It was with the expression which fancy might picture upon the prematurely care-worn

features of a Chatterton, that Vernon said, rather commenting on, than replying to, the remark of Everton: "The campaign of life! Yes, the expression is a just one. A campaign with its hardships, its privations, its forced marches; the enemy in front, the foe lurking by the wayside! We fight on till death opens the breach at last, and the voice which cannot be disobeyed cries 'forward!' Methinks one would gladly enough press on to that last struggle, if assured"——

"That it would end in victory and peace?"

"Ay, there's the rub," replied the youth, "especially to one who has wandered from the straight path as I have done. Not but that I believe," he added with more animation, "that, as the poet says, 'death is viewed not just as men are bad or good, but as their nerves may be endued.' There are Vines, Macintyre, Marham of ours, you know them as I do, and fifty more like them——men to whom religion and conscience are but as names, yet they would march to-morrow up to the cannon's mouth, with as little fear as if ordered on parade."

“There are different kinds of courage amongst men,” said George, “as there are different views of death. One fords the river with a calm confidence that safety and welcome await him at the other side; another, carried away by his own passions, takes a blind leap in the dark without hesitation or thought. There is the courage of instinct, the courage of pride, and,” he added, lowering his voice, “the courage of despair!”

“That last would have been mine but a year since,” said Vernon, “before you enlisted and joined our regiment. I was growing reckless and hated life, and for the life beyond—if a thought of that would come, I attempted to drown it in the bottle. I had been accustomed, as you know, to another way of living; there seemed little chance once that I should ever carry a knapsack, or shoulder a musket. When a mere boy, impatient of the restraints of home, anxious to escape schooling, to be my own master, as I thought—fool that I was, and worse—I enlisted without the consent, I should rather say without the knowledge, of my parents. On the grief that I cost them I did

not dare to think. I had my way, and a way of bitterness I found it! I was little fitted to withstand the influence of others. What shocked at first soon became familiar, and ere long was adopted as my own: the oath on my lips, and the dice in my hand, every step that I took was a downward one; intemperance was sapping the foundations of life; yes, but for you, George, I believe that ere now I might have lain, victim of my own follies, in the grave of the drunkard. You roused me to a sense of my guilt and shame, you taught me where to seek for pardon and strength. Yes," he continued, warming as he spoke, "if I ever return to my father's home, or reach another home in a better world, George, I shall owe it to you."

"And I believed that I had nothing left to live for," thought the soldier to himself. "This poor boy has taught me that in the passionate desire for death there may be as much blindness and rebellion as in its abject fear. We may show ourselves cowards in either."

"George," said Vernon, after a pause, "you have never told us why you enlisted. Your

education must have fitted you for a different sphere; was it love of martial glory, the hope to win a name? And truly this were a scene," he cried, looking towards the sea, "to make any heart burn for the life of a soldier! Every sound, every sight is inspiriting to the soul. Look at yon boat, riding the waves like a sea-bird, as if proud of her freight of strong hands and proud hearts. He's a dashing young officer who is standing at the bow; I guess that his gold lace and his bright epaulettes will look a little less gay before he quits the shore of the Crimea! He springs to land as if taking possession of the soil. Why, George," exclaimed Vernon, looking up with surprise into the face of his companion, "what ails you? Do you see a serpent in the sand?"

"I do," muttered Everton between his teeth, as he turned away; "must his shadow cross my path even here?"

To explain the emotion felt by the soldier at the sight of one who was the last man whom he would have wished or have expected to see, it is necessary to give, in a few words, a sketch of the former life of George Everton, and the mo-

tives which had induced him to enter the army.

He was of gentle lineage, and had received a finished education; but his father had bequeathed to him nothing but an unsullied name, and he was constrained to commence "the campaign of life" in the position of a banker's clerk. This was a fate very different from what had been pictured in the day-dreams of an ardent spirit. Everton found it sometimes difficult to repress the cravings of his soul for a more extended sphere—a wider field of usefulness. Yet he felt that he was in the station to which it had pleased Providence to call him, and there was a secret hope which had long cheered him in the daily routine of wearisome and uncongenial toil—a hope which had shone upon him like a star beaming on his path. He loved; loved one worthy of the deep affection of his earnest and constant soul; and he looked forward to the day, however distant it might be, when he might discover to her the secret of his heart, and ask her to share with him the little independence which he was struggling to obtain. Long before that day could arrive,

his secret was discovered, and by a rival, the only son of the banker, his employer.

Philip Brayburn would have, indeed, had little to fear from the rivalry of one so poor, had the decision between them been left to the sordid mind of the lady's brother and guardian—a man who regarded the acquisition of gold as the one great business of life, and pursued that business with a gambling spirit of speculation that often defeated its own object. But Brayburn knew well that in the estimation of Clara, character was more regarded than position—a spotless reputation than gold. To destroy that reputation—the poor man's sole possession—was now the object of the banker's son. By a net-work of calumny, into whose meshes we need not closely examine, he fixed upon his victim a charge of peculation which the young man was unable to disprove. George was not dragged to the bar of justice to defend that which was dearer than life; the mercy of his employer, a feeling of long-cherished regard, and yet more, perhaps, the secret consciousness of his accuser, that truth might at length come to light, preserved him

from that bitter trial; but his spirit writhed in anguish no less acute from the blow which had wounded his honour. He quitted the house which had been his home with feelings bordering on madness, preserved only by religious principle from the last resource of despair; but he had one source of comfort which no earthly trial could destroy—one Friend to whom misfortune but drew him more near.

George Everton had no close family ties; he stood alone in the world, without even a character with which to recommence life. His resolution was soon fixed; he made a hasty journey to Ireland, and there enlisted in a regiment about to embark for Gibraltar, leaving his country without daring to seek an interview with her whose name could never be linked with one on which rested the stain of dishonour. Bitter recollections, blighted hopes, formed to him the dreary vista of the past, and the future, as regarded this world, lay dark before the eyes of the young soldier; but the present had its duties and its privileges; there was a work still appointed him to do, and the light which, unquenched by temptation or by trial, shone

brightly amidst the varied scenes of a military life, was the means of guiding others to that blessed faith which had been his own refuge in the hour of affliction. He had become serene and calm, though not happy, till the sudden appearance of his calumniator and rival, in the new character of an officer of the army in which he served, roused a fierce spirit in the bosom of the injured man, more hard to grapple with than even despair.

A night of storm succeeded the day of disembarkation ; floods of rain poured down upon the newly-landed troops, who were without the protection even of tents.

"We shall hardly wish each other 'good night,'" said Vernon, with a gloomy smile, as he laid himself down on the damp, cold ground, with his knapsack for a pillow. "I hear that our general bivouacs under a cart ; where all share alike, none can complain."

His words were interrupted by a dry, hollow cough.

George silently stooped and spread his own cloak over the sickly youth.

"You do not think that I would take it!"

cried Vernon, half raising himself and pushing it aside.

“ You have a home to return to,” whispered his comrade, replacing the covering.

“ And you ? ”——

“ No home but the grave ! ”

CHAPTER II.—THE ALMA.

“ WE shall have a warm day’s work of it, Vernon,” said George, as they stood upon the banks of the Alma, whose bright waters were so soon to run red with blood. The gallant battalions of Britain were around them, ready to “ do or die ; ” already the thunders of war had begun, and before them was the foe on the heights.

“ George,” said Vernon in a low tone, “ we know not what the issue of this struggle may be, or who may be living at its close. If I fall, let my parents know my fate ; tell them that I died the death of a soldier, that my dearest wish was ”——the sound of his voice was lost in the roar of the artillery.

Then for the first time the young English-

men saw the stern realities of war. The pulse of Vernon beat quicker, the flush of excitement burned on his hollow cheek, but it was not the excitement of fear. With eager impulse he grasped his weapon more firmly, leaned forward as if anticipating the command to advance, "like greyhound on the slip, straining against the leash," impatient to rush forward to the charge. Stern resolution, a determination to do his duty, spoke in the calm glance of Everton, as he awaited the signal for attack. He stood, no unworthy type of the character of his race. Less impatient to seek out danger than resolute to meet it, with his eye steadily fixed on the work to be performed; not blind to intervening perils, but looking beyond them; his courage resembled not the sparks on the anvil, but the deep strong glow of the furnace.

The signal was given; the columns dashed on, and plunged into the river which divided them from the foe. George felt the cool stream rise to his chest, as he struggled on, the foremost of his division. The next instant a heavy ball splashed into the waters close to his side;

another—and the soldier next to him fell to rise no more. No time to pity, no time to pause; all energy was concentrated in the one impulse to press forward! Up the bank sprang the English, rushed towards the heights, their cheer heard above the roar of the cannon! Soon all was enveloped in the dense cloud of smoke with which war, as if to hide from heaven his work of destruction, shrouds the field where man struggles with man. How soon were those brave lines thinned as they mounted the hills, where from a hundred points blazed the deadly fire; how many a gallant heart poured forth its life's blood on the sod where the leaden shower fell like hail!

As if bearing a charmed life, still unwounded, amid the dying and the dead, George Everton fought on his way. There was no longer order observed in the advance; the ranks reeled before the decimating fire from above, and the cannon peals drowned the voice of command. Once the soldier for a moment caught sight of Vernon, like himself in the thick of the fire. A ball had struck off the cap which the young soldier wore, and bare-

headed he was yet struggling forward. Still onward—upward—through smoke and through din, his breast panting, every muscle strained and quivering with exertion. George was now engaged hand to hand with the enemy. There was a desperate struggle around one of the guns, as desperate and bloody as if on its possession had rested the whole fortunes of the day. There stood that young officer whose gay appearance had attracted the attention of Vernon on his landing; grim and blood-stained he stood, his sword dyed to the hilt; a sabre-cut had struck the epaulette from his shoulder, and singling him out as a leader from the rest, three Russians were pressing hard upon him. In one he buried his blade; but ere he could withdraw it, or recover his balance, a glittering bayonet was pointed at his breast, and in another instant Brayburn would have been stretched lifeless beside his slain foe, when a sudden blow from the butt-end of a musket dashed the steel aside from its aim, and another laid the Russian at his feet. The officer knew not what hand dealt that blow; he was preserved—what mattered it who was the preserver? Where the

brave, the noble, the generous fell, he lived to share the honours of victory; amidst the thousands who mingle in the bloody fight, the messenger of death singles not out the guilty from the innocent.

Surrounded by enemies and the corpses of his comrades, his weapon broken in his hand, yet receding not one inch from the spot on which he had planted his foot, George maintained a desperate, an almost hopeless struggle. Hark! a cheer from behind—'tis a British cheer! onwards come rushing the Highlanders and the Guards, driving the enemy before them! Louder swells the wild tumult of battle—the clash of arms—the cry—the shout—till blood-bought victory closes the strife, and the shot-shattered colours of British regiments wave upon the heights of the Alma!

“Ha! Vernon, safe, my boy!” exclaimed George, when he first met his young comrade after the battle, and wrung his hand warmly in the joy of seeing him among the survivors. “How much we owe to the Divine goodness for this wonderful preservation!”

"The campaign of life, however, is not over yet; we may have many such a field before us yet," said the young soldier with a ghastly smile, leaning for support against a broken gun-carriage.

"You are not wounded?" inquired Everton, with anxiety.

"No, no blood drawn, but struck in the chest by a spent ball. I thought for the moment that all was over, but I believe that after all I shall see old England again." And the thought lighted up the poor boy's faded eye. "I say, George, many a heart will beat high at the tidings of a victory like this; mothers and wives will look up proudly when the names are mentioned of those who fought by the Alma!"

"There is no heart that will beat proudly for me," thought George, as he pressed his hand across his blood-stained brow.

CHAPTER III.—THE MARCH.

ON the horrors that succeed a battle I have no intention to dwell. Let a veil be drawn over the ghastly sights which show how dearly even

a victory is bought. The eyes that have wept for the fallen are not yet dry ; fond hearts still bleed for those who sleep in the distant Crimea. All honour to the memory of the brave men who have bequeathed to their country a fresh heritage of fame !

The dead were laid in their bloody graves, the wounded were gradually removed to the ships, and the rest of the army was ordered to prepare for a long march through the enemy's country. Wasted to a shadow, so faint and weak that he could scarcely perform the usual routine of duty, Vernon was urged by Everton, but in vain, to avail himself of the surgeon's certificate, and retire to recruit his strength at Scutari.

"They would say that I had had enough of it," he said, with a faint laugh ; "no, I will follow my colours while I have strength to march ; it will be time enough to rest within Sebastopol !"

For the first few miles the stripling walked on bravely ; he conversed much, though in a low voice, with George, talked of future services and promotion, and of a distant home.

His comrade had never before known him so free and unreserved in his communications, or so full of buoyant hope. After a while Vernon became more silent, a deadly paleness overspread his face, the toil-drops gathered upon his lip and brow, and his knees bent as he dragged his steps slowly along. He soon fell to the rear of the battalion.

"Vernon, let me carry your musket for you," said George. The youth shook his head, too weary for speech, but in a few minutes suffered the weapon, without opposition, to be taken from his unresisting hand.

Still on, on they marched, weary hour after hour; never to George had a march appeared so long before, for he feared that his young comrade would drop under the fatigue. At length, completely exhausted, Vernon sank by the side of a path by which the soldiers were then winding their way through a wood. Everton sprang to his side, and saw with alarm the change in the countenance of his companion. The hollow eye, the bloodless lip, the evident prostration of strength, showed at once the impossibility of the youth's proceeding farther.

“George,” exclaimed Vernon, faintly, “for the love of mercy procure me a draught of water! I heard the sound of a running stream but a few minutes since as we passed that opening in the wood. I have a feverish thirst, and a dull pain here,” he added, pressing his hand on his chest; “I fear that this march will be my last.”

George hastened to the spot pointed out, but searched that part of the wood in vain, and in vain listened for the sound of water with which a fevered imagination must have deluded the ear of his friend. Disappointed, he returned and found Vernon extended at full length on the ground, his visage covered with the ashen hue of death.

“How are you, my poor boy?” whispered the soldier, bending over him with the tenderness of a brother.

“Better, better,” replied Vernon, in a deep husky tone; “I knew that I should be better here. You hardly thought to see me home so soon. But it is cold here, bitterly cold!” and he shivered. “No matter, heap more wood on the fire! Bring me a cup of water

from our own stream; there is no draught like that! Mother, let me lay my head on your shoulder once more; I have had a harder pillow, and a colder since I left you. Have you not forgiven your wayward boy? Had you seen the sights that I have seen,—but your blood would curdle if I told you of half. I was struck to earth,—a Russian had his heel on my breast—I feel it still—it presses me down to the earth!” and he gasped as if in agony for breath.

“Oh, God of mercy! help him—save him!” exclaimed George; “I will hasten after the troops and bring back aid, if it be not too late;” but with the energy of a dying man Vernon clung to his arm.

“You shall not leave me!” he cried; “I should never find you again; I know that the enemy lie in ambush near. Who said that life was a campaign—that it might end in victory and peace? I know the breach is ready—the storming party under arms—you and I shall be first on the ramparts! I hear a voice cry, forward! But that is no besieged city before me, those are not enemies in front to meet us! I

know them—I know them—the dear grey walls—my white-haired father is stretching out his hands ; the din of war is all silenced and still ; I hear the sweet voices that I love—the laughter of the children, the chime of the church bells—they are ringing me a welcome home !”

As twilight spread her grey mantle over the woods, and but a pale tinge showed where the red sun had sunk, the weary spirit took its flight from earth. Sole watcher by the suffering, sole mourner by the dead, George knelt at the side of the lifeless corpse, and shed over it such tears as the brave may weep. Then he severed one fair lock from the stripling’s temple, and placed it in his bosom as a relic for those who, unconscious of their loss, might now in their own happy land be fondly looking forward to the return of him whose face they should behold no more. Everton had seen death in its most ghastly forms ; he had passed amidst bloody heaps of the slain, where former comrades lay bathed in their gore ; but with a feeling of deeper sadness he now rose from his knees, and gazed for the last time upon the remains of one whom he had loved better than he

believed that his seared heart could have ever loved mortal again.

“Oh, Vernon!” he murmured, as he spread over the corpse his military cloak—meet shroud for a soldier; “why was that life taken which was precious to so many, and that spared which is worthless, even to its possessor?”

But if the freed spirit of his friend could have spoken once more through those lifeless lips, words had been breathed which might have made even the world-weary man feel the value of the gift of prolonged existence. If poor Vernon had died in the path of honour, his soul unclouded by despair, though not untouched by remorse; if his bereaved parents would not mourn for him as those who have no hope; it was because an earthly instrument, itself tempered in the furnace of affliction, had severed the cords by which the weak, misguided young man was being gradually drawn down towards ruin. Shall the weary, tempest-tossed mariner murmur at the storm which has driven his bark within sight of a signal of distress, and made him the means of preserving some unfortunate castaway, who but for his aid must have

perished? Happy those who shall be welcomed to the haven of heaven by the companions whom they have guided to its shore!

How to rejoin the British army, on its way to Balaklava, was now the consideration of George. Absorbed in his attention to his expiring comrade, the difficulties of his own position had not at first presented themselves to his mind: but when, in the increasing darkness, he attempted to follow on the track of the troops, and found himself involved in the intricacies of a wood, in a country entirely unknown to him, where he might be in an instant surrounded and cut off by the foe, he felt all the peril of his situation. He soon lost all certainty of the way to be pursued, and listened in vain for any sound that might guide the ear where the eye could give no aid. Dimmer and dimmer grew the scene; the night wind howled through the branches with an ominous sound; the sense of solitude grew oppressive; wearied and almost despairing, the soldier paused at length, where a large tree, long ago struck down by lightning and left to decay where it had fallen, made a small space in the leafy canopy open to the sky.

Everton threw himself down on the knotted trunk, and looked upwards with a gloomy brow.

It was before him, the quiet evening star, as he had often beheld it in the land of his fathers, when it had seemed to him the emblem of hope. Never before had he seen it so large and so bright, as though heavenly hope, in the dark hour of trial, were bending down nearer to him whom all earthly hope had forsaken. Yes, it would shine as calmly on the field of blood as on the peaceful home; as its soft light fell on the infant's cradle, so would it rest on the soldier's grave! The sight of that mild planet, hung and supported in the blue depths of infinite space by the same Almighty hand that guides the Christian below, shed a feeling of calm on a wounded spirit. In the gloom of that dark forest, solitary, desolate, and surrounded by danger, George lifted up his heart in silent prayer, and felt himself no longer alone.

CHAPTER IV.—THE STRUGGLE.

Hark! 'twas the sudden sharp report of a rifle,

followed instantly by a pistol-shot. It startled the soldier from his solitary musing; and with an instinctive feeling that where danger was, there his post should be, without a moment's hesitation Everton sprang towards the spot whence the sounds had proceeded. Forcing his way with some difficulty through the brush-wood, and still carrying with him his musket, his speed quickened by a noise as from a struggle, the soldier soon came in sight of a scene which stirred up all the fire in his English blood. A horse and rider lay struggling on the ground, surrounded by a party of wild Cossacks, eager as wolves that have pulled down the prey. The light was faint, but it was sufficient to show the scarlet uniform of a British officer in the dusk. In an instant the musket of George was levelled and discharged with deadly aim; and, with a sudden shout which rang through the woods, he rushed to the rescue of his countryman.

The spirit of the Russian troops had not yet recovered from the shock of the defeat at the Alma. It is on record that thousands fled with precipitate haste from an insignificant force,

whose strength they had only measured by their fears. The sound of an English cheer, the sudden report of fire-arms that had rung so fearfully amidst the ranks of the Russians, and the unexpected fall of one of their number sufficed in one minute to scatter the band.

“The English are upon us!” was the cry, and without waiting to ascertain the number of their assailants, the Cossacks fled in every direction.

Everton bounded forward to assist the officer to rise; but ere he reached his side, the gallant steed had struggled to his feet, and his rider, released from overwhelming numbers, stood panting and breathless beside him.

“My brave preserver!” exclaimed he, eagerly stretching out his hand towards George; then starting back as if a spectre had suddenly risen from the ground before him, he gasped forth the name, “George Everton!” Both stood for a moment transfixed; but Brayburn—for it was he—was the first to speak; recovering his accustomed presence of mind, as if ashamed of having been

surprised into betraying any emotion, he added abruptly, "How came you here?"

"How came I here!" exclaimed Everton, his long smothered indignation bursting forth unrestrained; "ask him who drove me from my country with a tarnished name—robbed me of my fair fame—my sole possession on earth; ask him who dares to wear that uniform, the badge of unstained honour, over a breast conscious of his own guilt, and of the innocence of the man whom he has ruined!"

"Not ruined, no," said Brayburn, in hurried tones; "you know not what has passed since you suddenly left our house; and for the life which I owe you this night, I will not leave you in ignorance still. My father rested not till he had searched into the very depth of the affair; circumstances came out—and—I found home no place for me; so a commission was purchased at once, and I quitted my old haunts for ever."

"My generous friend then knows my innocence?" cried Everton.

"He knew it—knew it from my own lips, and caused search to be made for you over half

England. That was vain; but he ever said that you would one day return, and has bequeathed to you that which will put you beyond poverty for the remainder of your life. Almost his last words'—

“His last words!” exclaimed George; “have I then lost my friend?”

“This is neither the time nor place for laments,” said Brayburn, for even to his hardened heart there were remembrances which bore the sting of the scorpion. He had seen—does earth hold a more fearful sight?—a father’s head bowed down, his spirits broken, his days shortened, by the anguish only second to that of remorse—the guilt of an only son. Impatient to end the interview, Brayburn sprang upon his horse, and as he gathered up the reins, bent from his saddle to add in a rapid voice: “I am sent back with orders for a division of our forces that has been delayed on its march; if, as I conjecture, you are a straggler from those in advance, and are seeking to rejoin your regiment, there lies your path; keep that planet to your right; our men have halted not two miles from hence. One word, however, ere we part. I see

your position, and you know mine; your regard for the memory of him whose name I bear, assures me of your silence and discretion; and, perhaps," he added, inaudibly to himself, as he pressed his spur against his courser's side, "before this war ends, some lucky Russian bullet may make assurance doubly sure."

As if the scarcely uttered words had wakened the demon of destruction, the steed had given but one forward bound, when again the death volley startled the ear. The savage Cossacks, recovering from the panic with which they had been seized, impatient for slaughter and eager for spoil, with a wild yell rushed again from the thicket to the attack. Against such fearful odds, vain was even the courage of desperation. George fell first, struck down by a bullet while grappling with the foremost foe; Brayburn's bridle was seized, and he was dragged to the earth, struggling fiercely, the murderous steel gleaming around him. The warm life's blood was gushing from a dozen wounds. No mercy was asked; it would have been asked in vain. Short time sufficed for the death-struggle, or the spoiling of the slain. A few brief minutes

and that spot was silent and deserted, as when the sun's last rays had streamed through the leaves: but eyes dim and glazed in death seemed still coldly gazing upon the sky, and the dark pool of blood on the much-trampled soil bore fearful witness to the fell work of slaughter.

CHAPTER V.—THE EMIGRANT'S HOME.

We will now change the scene to the interior of a dwelling which had been, until a short period before the breaking out of the war, occupied by emigrants from England. Thomas Rawdon, its present proprietor, after attempting various other speculations in which he had met with little success, had sought to invest his small remaining capital to advantage in the purchase of vineyards in the distant Crimea, heedless of the impending shadow which had already begun to darken the eastern horizon. When the Allies declared war against Russia, he found himself in the helpless position of an exile, an object of suspicion in the land which he had adopted, and at the same time unable to claim protection

from the country he had left. Fear urged him to fly, but necessity bound him to the soil in which he had sunk all that he possessed ; and often and bitterly had he rued the day when he forsook his native shore, to pursue a vain phantom of fortune which still receded before him. To his foreign home I will now introduce the reader.

“ It was the sound of a rifle—my ears could not be deceived ! ” was the terrified exclamation of a sickly-looking man, who, half dressed, half swathed in the wrappings of an invalid, was nervously hurrying from one part of his apartment to another. Now he stood at the window, peering anxiously out on the dark landscape which surrounded his lonely farm ; now, for the third time, he violently rang the bell, whose summons no one seemed disposed to obey.

“ Would that I had never had the madness to come to this detestable country ! For once I have made—but no, it was impossible to calculate upon so improbable an event as this hateful war. I shall have my fields trodden down, my flocks carried off, my vineyards laid waste, my house burnt over my head ; a regiment of

red-coats one day, like a flight of locusts, upon me; a horde of Tartars the next, like hornets swarming around. There again—another shot! Will no one answer?" and, with an imprecation on his lips, Rawdon again rushed frantically to the bell.

At length the door was hastily opened, and a maiden entered, with hurried step and anxious eye.

"Where is Katherine, and Romanoff?" cried the impatient invalid. "I have been ringing for this half-hour, and the house appears deserted!"

"It is deserted," replied the young girl, faintly.

"Deserted!" repeated her brother, in tones of horror. "What has become of our servants; where have they gone?"

"I have searched every room, and every room is empty. They must have fled from the approach of the Cossacks. Rawdon, we, too, must fly!" Her lips quivered as she spoke; but her manner was still calm, as she took from their place the grego and fur cap which would be required for a journey at night.

"Who will saddle our horses for us?" said Rawdon, looking round with a bewildered air.

"That need give us no thought; there is neither horse in the stable nor bridle on the wall."

"Then flight is impossible!" exclaimed the bewildered man, sinking back upon his chair. "What can we do?—where can we go?"

"We must make our way by the back path which runs into the road to Balaklava. We must be prompt; no time is to be lost."

"It is impossible!" again exclaimed Rawdon, rocking himself to and fro on his chair. "In the night—without attendants—not knowing what dangers may infest the road? No, no; we must stay here,——"

"And perish!" said the English girl, in a low but distinct tone, which conveyed to the listener a deeper sense of the peril of their situation than any expression of fear could have done. "Did you not hear the shots in the wood? I heard more; I heard the yell of the Cossacks! Brother, they are approaching; and will they spare? We are English; what mercy can we expect at their hands?"

“Let us fly!” exclaimed the wretched man, starting from his seat. “Oh, why have we delayed so long?”

At that moment a confused sound as of approaching feet, mingled with that of savage voices, was heard. Clara instantly extinguished the light.

“Let us hasten down,” she whispered. “I have barred the front door; it will be some minutes before they can force an entrance. The plunder that they will find here may prevent, or at least delay, pursuit. Let us keep up our courage, and trust in the protection of Heaven.”

But for the support of that delicate girl—of her whose wishes he had never consulted, whose happiness he had never considered, the miserable Rawdon, his speed impeded by the very eagerness of his haste, could scarcely have even reached the back entrance. His teeth chattered, his knees trembled in the extremity of his fear, as now loud thunderings at the front door, and wild yells and execrations showed at once the savage fury and the proximity of the foe. Clara’s fingers drew back the bolt—they

were in the open air. They fled across the small, narrow court, and an iron gate alone divided them from the scarcely-trodden track by which they must pursue their flight.

"Give me the key," said Clara to her brother. With his nervous, trembling fingers, Rawdon fumbled and searched; then, with an expression of blank horror, he exclaimed, "We are lost! I have it not with me!" and, as louder and louder sounded the yells behind them, he shook the gate with frantic violence, as if to force a passage through the bars.

"I must return. Where shall I find the key?" cried the trembling Clara, rousing up her fainting courage, to meet the fearful emergency."

"I do not know—I cannot remember," cried Rawdon, redoubling his wild efforts. "Yes, yes, I recollect; I placed it myself above the fireplace in the hall." Scarcely were the words uttered, when Clara sprang back into the house.

Finding her way through the darkness, gliding on like a spirit, she entered that part of the dwelling where, save the door and win-

dow, both bolted and barred, but threatening every moment to yield to the assault of the fierce crowd, nothing separated her from the assailants without. The dim light of the still red embers of a dying fire guided her steps at once to the spot which she sought to reach; she laid her hand on the key—her cold, tremulous hand; but at that instant, with a loud crash, the door gave way, and with a wild shout, the Cossacks burst in. There was no time to retreat to the door by which she had entered; but with one bound Clara sprang to a curtain which covered the recess of the window, and shrank behind it as the ruffian band broke into the house. Much need had she then of a sustaining trust in God, as she stood, trembling and palpitating, scarcely daring to breathe, like a dove when the falcon swoops down upon her—a shuddering witness to a scene of wild riot and plunder—watching those whose next movement might betray her place of concealment.

In a few minutes the whole place was plundered and sacked, and all destroyed that could not be carried away. The clock was torn from

the wall, and dashed into pieces; tables overturned, and chairs flung down on every side; the few treasured pictures, which had been brought from a happier home, were pierced with knives or riddled with bullets. The sound of tramping feet and wild laughter above-head told that the work of destruction was carried on all over the dwelling; no part was sacred from the search of the spoiler. But it soon became evident where the strongest attraction lay. Louder sounds and fiercer shouts from the direction of the cellar, gave token that the excitement of intoxication was added to that of plunder, and that the stimulant which rouses the savage passions of man had been abundantly found by those who sought it.

But the keenest, the most painful interest of Clara was drawn to the opposite side of the hall, where a party of the Cossacks had flung down with violence some object which they had dragged in along with them on entering. Clara kept her eyes fixed, as if fascinated, upon that spot; till, accustomed to the dim light which faintly fell upon the place, she felt assured of two things, which made every fibre in her frame

thrill with emotion. There was life in the object, for it feebly moved; and it was no wounded Cossack that lay there in his blood: the eye of a daughter of England could not mistake the red uniform in which her countrymen have so often fought and conquered. Even personal terror was half forgotten in the painful feeling of sympathy, and her blood curdled in her veins as a Cossack struck the prostrate soldier with his foot, and exclaimed in a language which her sojourn in the Crimea enabled her partially to comprehend—"As for this wretch, he is a spy, and shall suffer the fate of a spy; but first we will wring from him all that he can tell us of the movements of the English. Raise him, and bind him fast to that pillar. There's enough of life left in him yet for speech now, and for suffering afterwards."

As the Russians obeyed the command of their leader, a heap of papers was suddenly thrown on the fire by a plunderer who had just sacked a chest; the flame rose with brief but vivid brightness, the blaze lighted up the whole place, and Clara beheld, with a horror that

seemed to sear her brain with fire, the pale but manly features of George Everton !

“ Answer me,” said the Russian to his captive, in the French language, raising his horse-pistol in a menacing attitude ; “ came you not as one of the invaders of our holy Russia, as the enemy of our faith and of our Czar ?”

“ I am an Englishman and a Christian,” faintly replied the soldier. How lately would the unhappy Clara have given ten years of life to know that she should ever listen again to the tones of that voice ; and now it had been less terrible to have seen those lips closed in the rigidity of death, to have been assured that the sufferer was beyond the reach of insult, or the ruthless barbarity of man.

The Russian pursued his interrogations in a coarse, brutal manner, to which the wounded man feebly but firmly replied, as one who knew the sentence of death to be already passed upon him—who expected and was prepared for the worst.

“ Whither are the troops of England now marching ?”

“ Wherever their duty may lead them.”

“What is the present strength of your army?”

“Courage, a just cause, and a firm trust in God.”

It was doubtful what sterner means might have been made use of by the Cossack to force from his defenceless captive more definite information, for he was not one of those officers of the regular army, habituated to civilized life, whose ready exchange of manly courtesies have softened the rugged front of war; but a fierce leader of a fierce band—rather a robber than a soldier, mad with bigotry, and acknowledging no law but the will of his all-powerful Czar. But as he approached Everton, with a gesture which made Clara shudder and tremble, his attention was suddenly diverted by a shriek from the back of the house, so loud, so thrilling, that it seemed the utterance of the human voice in the last extremity of fear. It was succeeded by a low, hollow groan; and, followed by a savage Cossack, Rawdon staggered into the room, gazed wildly round, stretched out his hands, as if imploring for mercy, and fell a corpse by the hearth of his own home.

In one night, it is said, the fair locks of a suffering queen attained prematurely the hue of age; but the agony which turned her hair white deadened not the senses, nor took away the powers of the mind. Clara stood aghast with horror, her eyes wildly fixed, her hands clenched; but she neither fainted nor fell. The gold which her wretched brother habitually carried about him, fastened carefully in the folds of his dress, soon drew around him every one of the plunderers who were not detained by the contents of the cellar below. And was it for this that that brain had formed its maze of endless schemes?—was it for this that home and comfort had been forsaken, and that honour, truth, and principle had so often been sacrificed upon the altar of sordid Mammon? The life of Rawdon had been one great mistake; deceiving others, but most of all being himself deceived, he had existed in a vain dream, from which he was only wakened by the dagger of his murderers.

The work of plunder was done; intemperance held its reign, and its effects were speedily manifest. The loud shout and brutal song

were at length succeeded by the drowsiness of intoxication. One wretched being tottered to the window where stood the trembling Clara; he staggered against the curtain, and fell back into the recess, so near to the young girl, that had he stretched out his arm he must have struck her. She stirred not, however, scarcely respired, till the heavy sound of his breathing told that he was wrapp'd in unconsciousness. The glimmer of the fire had died away; the only light that entered the hall was from the moonlight from without, which, streaming through the open back-door, and across the narrow passage, formed a whitish strip upon the matted floor, resting on the sleeping form of the leader of the Cossacks, as he lay close to, but not obstructing, the entrance.

There was a slight tremulous motion in the curtain; then slowly, cautiously, was it drawn back, and, like a timid fawn startled by the hunter's bugle, Clara glided from her place of concealment. The key of the iron gate was in her bosom; with a noiseless step she moved towards the door, but paused beside the slumbering Cossack. Oh, how her hand trembled,

how fast beat her heart, how fervent was her agonized but silent prayer! A knife was in the belt of the sleeping ruffian, and the moonlight was shining on its hilt. Clara bent down and touched it, then drew back in terror. Again she laid on the cold metal a still colder hand, and attempted gradually to draw it from its sheath. As inch by inch the weapon lengthened in her grasp, the sleeping man stirred, and she paused, as if, in the act of drawing the knife, fear had suddenly transformed her to marble; but, with a muttered oath and an uneasy movement, the Cossack relapsed into slumber, and the pale maiden once more stood erect, with the murderous steel in her hand.

The way to escape was open before her; the passage was empty, the court deserted; and yet it was not in that direction that she turned her straining eyes. Immediate flight did not even cross her mind. Could it be—would she dare to cross that hall, where her first step might arouse the murderers, with her brother's blood still red upon their hands? She would dare; for, to her woman's heart, more than life

was at stake; and the maiden would have endured ten thousand deaths rather than fly and leave Everton to his fate. As the pressure from without makes the liquid silver mount higher in the tube, so trials only raise the devoted soul to more exalted efforts. Clara, while there was light in the apartment, had carefully marked where an enemy lay, or where piles of broken furniture presented an obstruction between her and the captive; but now even the moonlight became suddenly obscured, and the place was wrapt in the profoundest darkness. With nerves excited and brain overwrought, the unhappy girl became confused and bewildered; she was not certain of her own position, nor of that of any object in the hall. A horrible dread that she should never reach George arose in her mind—a conviction that she should stumble over some obstacle and rouse the sleepers.

In that moment of anguish, more acute even than any that had preceded it, a low sound—so low, that it might not have reached any ear whose faculty was not, like her own, sharpened to intensity by fear—reached her

through the stillness. It was the voice of prayer, uttered in her native tongue: "My trust is in Thee; save me, for my hope is in Thy mercy." Everton, standing, as he believed, upon the brink of eternity, surrounded by enemies, without prospect of relief, assured of a speedy and violent death when morn should awaken his captors, even if life in the meantime ebbed not silently away, lifted up his heart in supplication to the Being in whose presence he was so shortly to appear. In the midst of his prayer, he felt something touch him like the icy fingers of a corpse; he started involuntarily, but uttered no exclamation, and waited in silent wonder while some unknown hand, with tremulous eagerness, severed the rope which bound him. The action was unmistakeable; some friend must be near—some friend who would risk life to save him; but in the darkness George had not recognized the murdered Rawdon when he fell; and though the form of Clara had been present to his thoughts even when he deemed death most near, never having known of her brother's pro-

ject of emigration, the wildest dream of fancy never pictured her beside him.

Everton was free; but how could he avail himself of freedom? His brain was dizzy, his eyesight dim, strange sounds were in his ears, his strength was ebbing with the blood which still gushed from many a wound; but the instinct of self-preservation is strong in the human breast. With a great effort, accordingly, he rallied his failing energies, made firm will supply the place of strength, and leaning on the slender arm stretched out for his support, he made his silent way towards the entrance of the passage, where once again the moonshine served at once as light and guide.

Oh, what feelings thrilled through the bosom of Clara, as she felt the cool air on her brow like the breath of life! Hastily she drew her dark mantle over her head, with the ready instinct which told her that one glimpse of her face might at once paralyze the powers of her wounded companion, and the shock of recognizing her at such a moment break the almost severed cord of life. But when they stood at

the iron gate, no sound of pursuit behind, and Clara drew from her bosom the fatal key, the want of which had cost her wretched brother his life, the firmness of the poor girl seemed at length giving way. With nervous agitation she vainly endeavoured to find the lock; and but for George Everton's firmer hand, that gate might have remained a terrible barrier still. He unclosed it; it opened with a loud, creaking noise; Clara passed out, feeling like one in a horrible dream, till startled by a fierce voice from the hall which they had quitted, followed instantly by the report of a pistol, and the violent shutting of the gate.

It was closed; yes, it was closed between the fugitives and their pursuers! Oh! for one hour's strength, for on that strength hangs now the existence of both! Can the tortured sufferer spring from his death-bed to action—can strong will string to new vigour the nerves of him who is sinking beneath the benumbing influence of weakness and pain? Oh! there is a power which has worked its miracles of love; that power infused new life into the bosom of Everton. Clara had dropped her mantle at the

sound of the shot ; he saw her,—he knew her,—and was no more conscious of his wounds !

Onward they fled ; each fearing for, living for, the other ; over the rough, uneven ground, over the grass, wet with night-dew, pressing on in the fearful race for life. But the unnatural effort could last but for a while ; the impulse remained, but the power to obey it was gone. Everton sank down exhausted on the earth, and in faint accents implored his beloved one to leave him.

“I will never leave you !” she faltered, sinking on her knees by his side ; “we, at least, will perish together !”

The noise behind them increased—the sound of voices and the trampling of feet.

“They come !—they come ! Heaven have mercy on our souls !” cried Clara. Her senses reeled ; her spirit failed ; the scene swam before her eyes ; she was unconscious that she was surrounded now by armed men, and that the banner that they bore was that of England !

A few brief words will now suffice for the close of my tale. The soldier was borne insen-

sible to the camp; his wounds were examined and dressed, and pronounced to be of a most dangerous character. For some days, life seemed trembling in the balance; and if at length animation returned to the dim eye, the faint, fluttering pulse again calmly beat on, and the tongue resumed the power of utterance once more, who shall say that love and hope wrought not a charm more powerful to cure than all the resources of surgical skill? Everton was invalided and sent home; the injuries which he had received closed to him for ever the path of military promotion. His manly form was emaciated; his youthful vigour gone; his right arm was disabled for life; but it was with a calm and thankful heart that he sat on the deck of the transport in the evening, and watched the shore of the Crimea gradually receding from his view. He sat not alone, for another was beside him, her pallid countenance betraying that over her, as over him, the tempest of adversity had passed; but the very severity of that tempest had blown back the clouds which obscured their sky, and scattered blossoms on the path which henceforth they would tread to-

gether. Though Clara still shuddered at the remembrance of a brother's death, and George sighed as he thought on Vernon's early fate, nor left without a pang those brave spirits behind, whose dangers and whose glories he had shared; a rich mine of treasure had been opened in each heart, which to them outweighed the world beside. With a grateful remembrance of their preservation through past trials, a deep sense of the blessings of the present, and a bright hope for the days yet to come, the voyagers floated over the blue waves, which bore them towards their country, with the evening star shining bright above them.

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